

**EDUCATION
AND THE EARLY
MODERN ENGLISH SEPARATISTS**

submitted by

DAVID WILLIAM GURNEY, BD, BA, MA

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ABSTRACT

This study reassesses the significance of education in the lives and thinking of the early modern English Separatists. For this purpose, 'early modern' is construed as the period from the accession of Elizabeth I in 1558 to the outbreak of the First Civil War in 1642.

The thesis first describes the origins, nature and development of Separatism during this period, and then sets the study in context by delineating the nature of education in those eight or so decades. In order to facilitate the handling of the material germane to the study, the leading original proponents of the distinctive Separatist ideology are considered in chapters three and four. Chapter three deals with the three men who in the late Tudor years set the parameters for the subsequent growth of a comprehensive and self-consistent Separatist philosophy. Chapter four examines the contributions of the 17 most prominent men who built on their work in the early Stuart period.

The very fact of their prominence, however, entails the likelihood that they were better-educated than the majority of their fellow-believers, and perhaps to that extent unrepresentative of them. The resulting possible distortion is therefore corrected by investigating the educational levels of 52 Separatist prisoners in London gaols at the turn of the ninth and tenth decades of the sixteenth century.

Past work in this field has tended to a minimalist interpretation of the available evidence. This thesis concludes that both the

educational achievements of the first early modern English religious Separatists, and their attitudes to education, have been underestimated. It seeks to correct this misrepresentation with a judgement more closely corresponding to the evidence yielded by an objective review of the facts.

The expert guidance, constant support and unfailing courtesy of Professor Richard Aldrich, MA, MPhil, PhD, FRHistS of the University of London Institute of Education has been the single most significant factor in this undertaking. I place on record my deepest appreciation of all his help and encouragement throughout the whole course of my research, from its conception to its completion.

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INTRODUCTION

Consideration of the attitude of the early modern English Separatists to education requires prior establishment of their viability as a distinct, identifiable component of late 16th and early 17th century English society. The requirement highlights the difficulties facing the historian of a tiny, outlawed minority; their minute size and their illegality combined to make it likely that they would be of sufficient interest to attract the attention of only a few contemporary commentators. Indeed, it could be politically dangerous to show undue interest in them or their views, unless it were with the intention of denigrating them. Thus it is that such evidence as is still available 400 years later has been preserved largely in the context of the desire of hostile witnesses to present their protagonists in as unfavourable a light as possible. Assessment of the significance of these people is therefore constrained by the random accident of whether or not they came to the notice of the authorities. Some were considered to be more worthy of persecution than others; but persecution was obviously dependent on detection. It must also be borne in mind that the first Separatists were originally obscure individuals of whom very little is known.

At the same time, the religious thought and politics of the century or so before the outbreak of the English Civil Wars in 1642 has been the subject of extensive investigation in recent decades. The fruits of this work have been accessed in the comprehensive

holdings of Dr. Williams's Library, the Public Record Office, Lambeth Palace Library, the Guildhall Library, the Greater London Record Office and Canterbury Cathedral Library. However, the great majority of the manuscript sources, primary texts and secondary material available for consultation concentrate on the political, theological or social aspects of the religious controversies of the period. Specific educational interests are mostly though not solely, of peripheral concern.

Establishment of the viability of the first English Separatists as a coherent element in the life of their times depends on the delineation of the late Elizabethan and early Stuart religious movements in which they first emerged. Elizabeth I faced a very delicate situation on her accession to the throne in 1558. The persecution of Protestants during the preceding reign of her half-sister Mary I had run into gross excesses. Expectations for the new reign were accordingly pitched at similarly overblown levels; they were as dangerous for Elizabeth to ignore as they were impossible for her to meet. Her over-riding needs were first, the preservation of her throne for herself and then, running that a close second, the establishment of a secure dynasty for the safety of the nation. The combined pressure of these two imperatives meant that it would be courting almost certain disaster to appear to favour either the Roman Catholic or the Protestant side in the titanic struggle then engulfing the European mainland. This struggle had already taken England from Henry VIII's English Catholicism, first

to the left-of-centre Protestantism of Edward VI's reign, and then to the far-right Romanism of Mary I's rule. Elizabeth and her advisers were therefore driven by circumstances to seek, and if necessary impose by force, a political solution to a religious problem. The result was the establishment of a church co-terminous with the nation, to which all were deemed to belong. Its ceremonial looked to Rome, and its doctrine derived from Geneva but - and this was crucial - as many as possible of the issues likely to generate divisive controversy were couched in ambivalent terminology which allowed interpretations to suit as wide a range of tastes as possible.

The survival in recognisable form of this Church of England for more than four centuries must be acknowledged as a measure of the success of Elizabeth's policy - though its surprisingly easy initial acceptance by the great majority of the population probably betokens a combination of religious indifference and theological ignorance. Inevitably, however, there were two wings of disaffection, the Protestant and the Roman Catholic. In general terms, the Protestant party made the best of the running for the first three decades of the reign, starting with the restoration in 1559 of Edward VI's 1549 Prayer Book and the passing, also in 1559, of the Acts of Uniformity and Supremacy. Then in 1571 royal authority was given to the Thirty-Nine Articles (reduced by Convocation in 1563 from Edward VI's Forty Two), and in 1575 the Protestant-sympathising Edmund Grindal was appointed Archbishop

of Canterbury.

This ascendancy of the Protestant interest was greatly aided by developments on the political front, and notably in the realm of foreign affairs. The interlocking influences of the Counter-Reformation and the Hapsburg drive for hegemony in Europe converged to present Englishmen and women with a renewed threat of the Spanish domination from which they had only so recently escaped when Mary I died in 1558. Patriotic feeling appears to have played fully as great a part as, if not a greater part than, Protestant fervour in the unexpected acquiescence of the nation at large in the Elizabethan settlement of religion. Voices were, however, raised against it. Roman Catholics, convinced of Elizabeth's illegitimacy, looked for an unaltered continuation of the full-blooded papalism of the previous reign. They were not mollified by such minor concessions as some modifications to the 1549 Prayer Book, the queen's assumption of the title 'Supreme Governor' instead of 'Head' of the church, the selective administration of the Oath of Supremacy, or the retention of vestments in worship. No fewer than 13 bishops refused to accept the compromise. Roman Catholic discontent took concrete form in the rising of the northern earls in 1569; but its collapse in defeat must have encouraged the enthusiasts at the other end of the religious spectrum. Under the influence of the Marian exiles returned from the continent, they confidently, but ultimately unsuccessfully, pressed for completion of the reformation of the

church, which they regarded as but half-begun. The effectiveness of their campaign was diluted by successive splits into Puritans, willing to stay in the Church of England in the hope of being able to forward further reform from within: Presbyterians, intent on replacing episcopacy with the synodical form of church government favoured by the continental reformers and John Knox in Scotland: and the Separatists, convinced that the issues at stake were of such over-riding importance that they would brook neither half-measures nor delay.

Once again, the fortunes of the religious parties in England were decided more by coincidental secular facts, than overtly spiritual factors. The apogee of Elizabeth's reign, the defeat of the Armada in 1588, removed the threat of Spanish invasion; but by the same token it removed also the menace of Roman Catholic domination. Consequently, the government was free to turn its attention to left-wing religious dissent. Severe anti-Roman Catholic legislation remained on the Statute Book, though it was now only rarely applied to the full extent of its rigour, but draconian measures were both promulgated and implemented against the followers of Robert Browne, Henry Barrow, John Greenwood and John Penry, leaders of the movement for 'reformation without tarrying for anie'. These were the religious extremists of the day; as such, they inevitably attracted the unsympathetic attention of the authorities. They were the authors of their own misfortunes to the extent that one or more of their number, never unmistakably identified, wrote and published

the deliberately provocative Marpelate Tracts between 1587 and 1589. They were the more exposed to persecution because of the failure by the mid-1580's of the more moderate Presbyterian party of Cartwright, Field and Wilcox and their associates; and their vulnerability was increased when the radical sympathising Archbishop of Canterbury, Edmund Grindal, was suspended, apart from the exercise of his spiritual functions, in 1577, and followed in his post after his death in 1583 by the rigid Anglican, Whitgift. The Separatists were further undermined by the bitter opposition of Richard Bancroft, who first appeared in the Court of High Commission in 1587, and went on to be appointed to the See of Canterbury in 1604.

Thus, at the accession of the House of Stuart to the throne of England in 1603, the Church of England appeared to have come successfully through the threats and challenges with which it had been set about during the first seven decades of its existence. Moreover, there was more to its success than the mere apathy of the majority of the population.

Early seventeenth-century Anglicanism learnt from its rivals the value of sound foundations, and gave itself a much-needed theoretical justification by combining the Papists' reliance on tradition with the Puritans' appeal to Scripture. The tradition was, however, limited to that of the first four centuries of the Church's history, while the Scripture was diluted with reason. Nevertheless, an intellectually respectable case was made for the Anglican 'via

media' by such men as Richard Hooker in his Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, and Launcelot Andrewes in his preaching in defence of episcopacy. The Hampton Court Conference of 1604, which debated the markedly moderate requests made to James I by upwards of a thousand Puritan ministers in the Millenary Petition of 1603, appeared to mark the latter's defeat. Indeed, the Church of England capitalized on its success by moving onto the offensive against the dissidents with a comprehensive code of ecclesiastical discipline. However, it most unwisely allowed itself to be drawn by its own Erastianism into too close an identification with the early Stuart regime. The result was that ecclesiastical dissent came to be regarded as political opposition; and the most innocent expression of differing religious views was equated with treason.

At the same time, initially superficial controversies over such matters as ceremonial, and the conduct of worship, were given a theological stiffening by the arrival in England of the teaching of the Dutchman Arminius, and its rapid spread among the Anglican clergy. The Puritans still professed Calvin's doctrines; and their suspicion of the genuineness of the hierarchy's Protestantism was heightened by such things as the growing tendency to stress the continuity of the Church of England with the pre-Reformation church, James I's pro-Spanish foreign policy, and the favour shown to Roman Catholics by Charles I's queen, Henrietta Maria. Of greater significance were the government's conspicuous failure to do anything to support the Protestant cause in Europe, especially

after the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War in 1618; and, on the specifically religious front, the extension of the theory of divine right from the monarchy to the episcopate.

In fact, however, the Crown-Church axis only dug its own grave deeper by its harsh persecution of the Parliament-Puritan alliance. Savage sentences on such men as Leighton, Prynne, Lilburne, Bastwick and Burton exercised incalculable, and ineradicable, influence on the crowds of ordinary people who witnessed their sufferings; and sedulous reporting, and circulation of those reports, ensured that those not physically present were fully informed as to the bravery of the victims. This fact in itself goes a long way to accounting for the groundswell of widespread acquiescence in, though not necessarily active support for, the Puritan revolt against the politico-religious establishment which had effectively gained unstoppable momentum by 1640. G. Davies' comment about James I's Book of Sports may be cited as an apt summary of the policy of the Stuart government in Britain, and the Arminian ascendancy in the Church of England, in the years leading to the outbreak of the First Civil War - it was "a direct defiance of a growing mass of public opinion and ... an unnecessary affront to the Puritan conscience".¹

¹ G. Davies, The Early Stuarts 1603-1660 (Oxford History of England IX, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1937, 2nd edition 1959) 77

This, then, was the context in which Separatism emerged in early modern England. However, due probably to the combination of very sparse evidence, a virtually total lack of formal organisation, relative social insignificance and an assumed paucity of numbers, the Separatists are almost always treated as a relatively unimportant side-issue to the mainstream of the history of the reign of Elizabeth I. It is however at least possible that the supposed paucity of numbers may be a misjudgment.

It is impossible to estimate with any precision the exact numbers of these religious radicals, for there is no source which bears any resemblance to a census of early Protestants. Court records, themselves incomplete, simply reveal those heretics who were caught. Wills provide some clues, for their preambles frequently contained a statement about the testator's last thoughts on religion ... Unfortunately, however, there are serious problems in interpreting wills ... It is often unclear whether the opinions expressed in the preamble were those of the testator himself, or of the scribe who drew up the will. Again, ... any sample, no matter how large, will inevitably be unrepresentative of the laity as a whole, for it will be biased towards men, the sick and elderly, and those with some property to bequeath.²

A Dissenting congregation of "seventy-seven persons ... was surprised at the house of James Tynne, the goldsmith, in the parish of St. Martin's-in-the-fields on 4 March 1568"³ and there are

² S. Doran and C. Durston, Princes, Pastors and People: The Church and Religion in England 1529-1689 (London, Routledge, 1991) 97

³ R. Tudur Jones, Congregationalism in England, 1662 - 1962 (London, Independent Press Ltd., 1962) 14, citing C. Burrage, Early English Dissenters (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1912) II, 9-11; and A. Peel, The First Congregational Churches (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1920) 10, 26

references to other congregations existing at the same period.

That there were more than half-a-dozen Separatist congregations in London is suggested by contemporary estimates of the number of Separatists which range from the Bishop of London's modest two hundred to the Spanish Ambassador's five thousand.⁴

The fact that Shakespeare makes Sir Andrew Aguecheek in Act III Scene 2 of Twelfth Night declare "I had as lief be a Brownist as a politician" must be strongly suggestive of the conclusion that the majority of the theatre-going population of the metropolis would have understood the reference perfectly clearly. It may well be the case then, that numbers were not so few, nor influence so inconsiderable, as has tended to be assumed; and the first Separatists therefore emerge, by whatever criteria may be applied, as a group intrinsically significant enough to investigate.

Certainly historians in the Free Church tradition affirm that they are.

There can be no doubt at all as to the importance of the Free Church contribution to the making of modern England ... we are what we are because Free Churches have played so big a part in our life.⁵

Sir Ernest Barker, in a lecture at Hamburg in 1936, referred to "the genius of English Nonconformity, which is the peculiar and (it may even be said) the cardinal factor in the general development of

⁴ Ibid., 14

⁵ E. Payne, The Free Church Tradition in the Life of England (London, SCM Press Ltd., 1944) 16

English politics and English national life".⁶ The sentiment has also been expressed by foreign historians - the influence of the German thinker Troeltsch may be discerned in A.D. Lindsay's comment that

Democracy is the application to social life of the principle of the spiritual priesthood of all believers ... there cannot be a free state unless there is in it a free Church.⁷

Ultimately, however, it is the continued existence of the English Free Churches which justifies investigation of their roots and origins; and their history continues to attract researchers. Work continues on the attitudes towards education of the founding fathers of early modern English Dissent. R.L. Greaves in The Godly Commonwealth has drawn attention to the distinction between those Dissenters who emphasised a scholarly approach to the Bible, and the 'priesthood of all believers' men. Such a distinction carries with it wide-ranging implications for a Dissenting philosophy of education. It entails a significant difference of approach to attitudes relevant to education between people comprehended for other purposes under the umbrella term 'Dissenters'. Greaves does not pursue the point as far as it can be taken, because he does not press the differences between the people making up the sub-set 'Dissenters'. My study builds on Patrick Collinson's important distinction between Puritans, who protested against what they

⁶ E. Barker, Oliver Cromwell (Cambridge, Cambridge Miscellany, 1937) 28

⁷ A. Lindsay, The Churches and Democracy (London, Epworth Press, 1934) 31, 74

perceived as the inadequacies of the State-regulated reformation of the church but nevertheless drew back from the momentous step of cutting themselves off from it, and Separatists, who were convinced that the nature of the issues at stake left them no alternative but to "come out from among them" if the authorities failed to complete the work which had been so auspiciously begun in the reign of Henry VIII and carried further under his son Edward VI. The prime justification for separation from the church as by law established was indeed the very doctrine of the church itself, which is expounded in chapter 1; but the Separatists' exalted view as to the composition of the church had resonances which Greaves acknowledges, but does not fully explore.

The Separatists asserted that the Scriptures taught that believers were chosen to be recipients of the gift of faith, regardless of birth, background or merit, and that all were therefore on an equal footing in the church, whatever distinctions there might be between them outside it. This radical egalitarianism in the ecclesiastical sphere could not help but have quite startling consequences, one of which was the truly revolutionary concept of the priesthood of all believers. Since all the elect were deemed to have free and direct access to God, it followed that there was no need for a priestly order to mediate between God and His chosen people; and this concept was fairly rapidly extended to the exposition of Scripture as well - I refer in chapter 1 to the comment in T. Edwards' "Gangraena", published in 1646, that now "they were all taught of

God, and needed not that any-one should teach them." This is where I go beyond Dr. Greaves, in exploring the implications of this position among the Separatists. 'A scholarly approach to the Bible', while not necessarily limited to conforming Puritans, was more likely to be characteristic of them, than of Separatists; whilst the latter's embracing of the priesthood of all believers led inexorably to their advocacy of the right of every believer to untrammelled access to the Scriptures, and its virtually inescapable corollary - that of an education sufficient to fit them to deal competently with the printed word. Chapter 5 in particular demonstrates that this was indeed the case with a significant number of Elizabethan Separatists for whom records are extant.

"The Educational Origins of the Early Dissenting Schoolmasters"⁸ have been investigated by Patricia Marvell. Dissenting Schoolmasters are strictly speaking beyond the chronological bounds of the period covered by my study, in that they emerged in the last third of the seventeenth century, and were most prominent in the eighteenth century; but they were, as the appellation indicates, heirs to the Nonconforming tradition with the early history of which this thesis is primarily concerned. Of course other, later, influences came to play on men such as Richard Frankland at Rathmell, Charles Morton at Newington Green, John Jennings and his pupil Philip Doddridge at Northampton, and Joseph Priestley at

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P. Marvell, "The Educational Origins of the Early Dissenting Schoolmasters" (MPhil thesis, University of London, 1986)

Warrington; but they were in direct line of descent from the men examined in chapters 3 and 4 below, and are to that extent relevant to the interest of the present work. I take issue with Marvell's statement on page iii of the Abstract of her thesis that 'The early Dissenting Academies of the seventeenth century mainly followed the established traditional curriculum, and were not generally innovative.' The weight of scholarly opinion still supports the traditional view that in the second half of the seventeenth century, and well on into the eighteenth, the Academies may be said to have set the pace, not only in terms of standards, but also of the width of the curricula they offered. Irene Parker, in Dissenting Academies in England⁹ demonstrates that although classics remained the core of such curricula, they were joined by science and other modern subjects. The impetus for this development appears to have originated in the influence, predominantly at Cambridge in the late sixteenth century, of the ideas of Pierre de la Ramée, whose anti-hierarchical, egalitarian, even incipiently utilitarian, epistemology made a strong appeal to radical Protestants - especially when his translator, Dudley Fenner, replaced his classical allusions with Scriptural ones. His influence may then be detected in the advocacy of a 'realist' education by such people as Samuel Hartlib, Hezekiah Woodward, William Petty, John Comenius, Francis Bacon and John Dury. J.K. McConica is undoubtedly right in his comment "If we can learn what regional,

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I. Parker, Dissenting Academies in England (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1914)

economic, and family circumstances stand behind [them], we may be able to say more about their precise significance."¹⁰ But Patricia Marvell has not dislodged Irene Parker's judgement that 'The Dissenting Academies gave not merely an education to Dissenters but a "dissenting" education - an education, that is, which was different from that in the other schools - an education which became much broader than that in the universities and in the schools established by the law and controlled by the church.'

Of special relevance to the interest of this study is H. Foreman's work.¹¹ This author has also written "In defence of education: some early Separatist views",¹² "Robert Browne and education"¹³ and "A sixteenth-century radical's views on education: Henry Barrow".¹⁴ A case can be made for inaccuracy even in the title of Foreman's doctoral thesis. Chapter 4 below demonstrates that the earliest secure evidence for the existence of Baptists as a group distinct from Separatists per se in England is the emergence in

¹⁰ J.K. McConica, "The Prosopography of the Tudor University", Journal of Interdisciplinary History III, 3, (Winter 1973) 548

¹¹ H. Foreman, (a) "The Early Separatists: the Baptists and Education 1580-1780, with special reference to the education of the clergy" (PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1976)

¹² H. Foreman (b) "A Sixteenth-Century Radical's Views on Education: Henry Barrow" Journal of Educational Administration and History X (1978) 1

¹³ H. Foreman, (c) "Robert Browne and Education" Baptist Quarterly XXX (January 1983) 1

¹⁴ H. Foreman (d) "In Defence of Education: Some Early Separatist Views" Journal of Educational Administration and History XVII (July 1985) 2

1611 of an identifiable General Baptist Church meeting in Pinners' Hall in Newgate Street under the leadership of Thomas Helwys (although John Smyth appears to have come to his convictions about baptism in 1609, in Amsterdam). It is therefore misleading to juxtapose the date '1580' immediately after the phrase 'the Baptists and Education'.

However, I am more concerned to correct an impression of imbalance in Foreman's work arising from what I believe to be undue caution in his judgments. For example it is instructive to set his comment on the influence of continental reformers on English Separatism against those of E.H. Payne and S. Doran and C. Durston. Foreman writes

It is possible to trace the influence of theologians such as Luther, Zwingli and Calvin and of a group such as the Anabaptists of the Continent, but this does not mean that the dominant influence in the Separatist movement was Continental.¹⁵

Payne writes

The early Separatists ... stood in the Protestant succession, and to understand their aims and outlook, it has to be borne in mind that they inherited certain things from the earlier generations of the Reformation movement. From Luther himself they had learned the great doctrine of justification by faith; from the Reformers generally they had learned to appeal to Scripture and to base themselves on careful study of the text. From Calvin they gained the belief that they were to be "fellow-workers with a transcendent God, not in the mystical sense ... but as soldiers in an army on the side of God against the powers of evil" (quoting Inge, Protestantism, 1931 edition, 9); in his

¹⁵

H. Foreman, op. cit., 1976, 5

great Institutes (1536) they read the fullest and ablest exposition of the Protestant position, and in his citadel, Geneva, they many of them found a city of refuge when they were persecuted. From Zwingli and the Anabaptists came other elements in their inheritance ... The Anabaptists gave them further encouragement to new experiments based upon a study of the New Testament, and in particular [this is significant] contributed to their inquiry as to the real nature of the church. These summary statements may serve to indicate the richness and strength of the impulses coming from the main sections of the Continental Reformation.¹⁶

Doran and Durston write

Anabaptists from the Netherlands ... fled to England in their hundreds, possibly even thousands, to escape from less tolerant regimes at home.¹⁷

Of course, the traffic was two-way:

A number of the gathered churches established in England in the second half of the sixteenth century had escaped persecution by emigrating to the more tolerant United Provinces ... There, many of their members had absorbed some of the more radical ideas of the continental Anabaptists.¹⁸

Furthermore, Foreman writes,

Browne does not acknowledge any Zurich influence but it is unlikely that he was unaware of the Zurich practice. He made ... a visit to Holland where it is ... likely that he met the Mennonites whose theology was Zwinglian in character and ... Zwinglian influence was not unknown amongst the English Puritans ... the possibility, if not the probability, of Browne's having

¹⁶ E. Payne, op. cit., 30

¹⁷ S. Doran and C. Durston, op. cit., 97

¹⁸ Ibid., 110

been influenced by Zurich cannot be lightly dismissed.¹⁹

This statement represents at the very least a marked modification of the playing-down on page 5, noted above, of continental influence on the Separatist movement.

The charge against Foreman here is not one of factual inaccuracy, but of drawing a conclusion which falls short of an adequate interpretation of such evidence as exists. In his comment quoted above he concedes the possibility of tracing the influence of the Anabaptists on the Separatist movement; but only nine pages later he denies that there is any evidence of them influencing the latter. "A comparison of the Anabaptist beliefs with those held by the Separatists ... shows that whilst they were in agreement on some points there was much more on which they disagreed." Certainly contemporary evidence leaves no room for doubt that Separatists were considered to be so close to Anabaptists as to be not worth the effort of distinguishing between them; in his An Answere to George Gifford's Pretended Defence of Read Praiers and Devised Litourgies (1590) John Greenwood complained that Gifford "loadeth not only me, but all the faithful that walke by the rule of God's worde with opprobrious titles, of Donatists, Brownists, Anabaptists, heretiques, schismatiques, seditious, folish, frantick, etc., to bring not only us but the truth of God into contempt." (A ii verso - A iii recto).

¹⁹

H. Foreman, op. cit., 1976, 66

Of greater concern is Foreman's professed perception of a division between what he appears to see as divergent wings of Elizabethan Separatism. He writes "Those [early Separatist leaders] who were opposed to an educated ministry were possessed of radical views on a number of matters in contrast to those of their brethren who were favourably disposed to an educated ministry."²⁰ This is altogether unsatisfactory. He suggests that there was a wider chasm between those who opposed an educated ministry, and those who favoured it, than the surviving evidence will support; and then, even more unacceptably, proceeds to utilise that unsound criterion as a base upon which to erect a theory of radically differing views "on a number of matters" (not specified). In all probability the problem arises from the fact, acknowledged elsewhere in my own work, that education was not the prime concern of the early modern English Separatists. Their over-riding theme was religious and ecclesiological, not social and educational; that fact makes it all the more imperative to resist the temptation to construct an assessment of Separatism on a foundation which was ancillary to its paramount interest. It is true that on a surface reading the writings of the first Separatists appear to reveal different attitudes towards the value of education for the clergy; but it is my contention that a closer reading of the evidence shows that those whom Foreman characterises as opposing an educated

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H. Foreman, op. cit., 1976, 54

ministry were in fact primarily critical of the education available for intending clergymen at that time. This issue is dealt with more fully in chapter 3 below; suffice it to say here that it is too simplistic by far to write, as Foreman does on page 54, of 'their division over education and the ministry', and to allocate them to arbitrary categories of "opposed to ... [and] favourably disposed to an educated ministry." Such differences as are discernible in their attitudes are much more realistically attributed to differences of emphasis, conditioned by the pressures and demands of the immediate situation in which the writers found themselves working at different times. I expand my interpretation of this view in chapters 3 and 4 below by suggesting the concept of development of Separatist attitudes towards education. I submit that this has the advantage of allowing for the fact of organic continuity and growth, which goes some way towards mitigating the impression of rigid immobility suggested by mere judgements of 'for' and 'against'.

The studies noted here have tended in the main to be descriptive of symptoms rather than investigative of causes. I have tried to be aware of the danger of constructing a theory which the subjects of this study would never recognise, and of imposing on their words and actions interpretations which such words and actions simply cannot bear. Nevertheless, I hope to demonstrate that men who were wholly occupied with reacting to the invariably severe pressures of rapidly-unfolding events can in fact be shown to have

evolved, even if only sub-consciously, an attitude to education which, despite some internal tensions and inconsistencies, justifies the concept of an embryonic philosophy of education among the early modern Dissenters.

It is, however, essential to be aware of the atmosphere in which Dissenting ideas on education emerged, and the background against which they evolved. The sitz-im-leben which gave them birth was still basically that of the Reformation. The men who took their cue from Robert Browne, often described as the Father of Congregationalism, were, as H. Davies comments, "impatient Puritan[s] who... 'judged that the Kingdom of God was not to be begun by whole parishes, but rather of the worthiest, were they never so few'."²¹ These men considered that the Reformation was incomplete, and that they were under an irresistible imperative to carry it forward to what they believed to be its essential conclusion. Nevertheless, they inherited, and were inevitably influenced by, a mind-set which did not place education at the top of the agenda. R. O'Day has made the point that historians of the Reformation appear to regard 'education' as a dirty word, few of them doing more than nodding in the direction of acknowledging its importance; but she goes on to comment that "Contemporaries of the Reformation would have disagreed. They believed that where the parish priest and schoolmaster led, there would the people follow.

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H. Davies, The English Free Churches (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1952) 51, quoting R. Browne, A True and Short Declaration (1584)

They therefore attached the greatest importance to the education of the preacher and teacher, but they also put real effort into designing the content of education for the laity".²²

But there is tension here. In the religious sphere, perhaps, more so than in any other, people seeking to implement change and development are far more dependent on the influence of the past than they would be prepared to acknowledge, no matter how determined they may be to break away from it and initiate something entirely new.

On the face of it, it might seem that the Reformation of its nature rejected history. And so in a sense, it did, or at least the force of recent precedent. After all, the new religion involved a break with the recent past ... But it is no less true that the English Reformation used history - an interpretation of the past - to justify its existence, its goals and its actions.²³

The words are as true of the first Separatists as they are of the first Reformers, to whom they were originally applied. On the other hand, it can be argued that it was education which laid the foundations for originality and creativity, even in England, where the very idea of innovation in religion was so abhorrent that it was often masked by appeals to a history which was mostly entirely fictitious. Certainly people who disagreed with the form in which the Church of England developed, and the course it took, asked

²² R. O'Day, The Debate on the English Reformation (London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1986) 163

²³ Ibid., 5

neither for liberty nor for toleration, but rather for the triumph of their own ideas. It was this which impelled them into the equal and very great dangers of either dissent in England, or emigration to the New World.

But to what extent can Separatism be said to have existed as a cohesive movement, with a coherent ideology, in this period?

In 14 or so books on Elizabethan Puritanism published since 1970, Patrick Collinson has provided a comprehensive foundation for both current and future work in this field; but as this thesis is not primarily a study of Separatism, but of its interaction with education, a summary of his findings would not be relevant here. However, his belief that Separatism is first identifiable as a stirring within the Church of England makes the useful point that the movement did not spring to birth, fully developed, ex nihilo.

There was an extensive area of corporate religious experience within the establishment over which the official church had little control ... whether these godly doings were private or public in character was a point of dispute between the non-separating congregationalists and their separatist opponents, but for all practical purposes the distinction had little meaning. So long as their meetings were not called in question, the Church of England had within it the essential ingredients of the true churches of God ... Separatist movements ... are probably to be understood as the response of such a group to persecution or to the deprivation of its leadership ... Voluntarist groups ... before their separation seem to have possessed some identity as gathered companies within the establishment.²⁴

²⁴

P. Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement (London, Jonathan Cape, 1967) 380-381

Collinson attributes the emergence of Separatism as a movement distinct from the established church to the twin motors of dissatisfaction with what some considered to be an incomplete reformation -

Partly as a consequence of the frustration of Puritan hopes of a further reformation of the parish churches, the godly were gathering in increasing numbers in non-parochial meetings ... Separation was implicit in the inevitable isolation of real and fervent protestants in a nominally protestant and largely indifferent environment²⁵

- and to the persecution which broke out when these 'hotter sort of protestants' made apparent their dissatisfaction with a church 'but halfly reformed' - "Separations followed hard on periods of energetic episcopal activity when preachers had been suspended and displaced." But although "many more such groups remained within the fellowship of the parish, their separatism only potential ... the indefinite postponement of any further reformation prepared the way for the seventeenth century, when separating ... variations of congregationalism would more than hold their own with the 'old English puritanism' of Elizabeth's days."²⁶

These were men and women who "were thinking beyond the boundaries marked for them by society. Some very few wished to

²⁵ Ibid., 382 and 375

²⁶ Ibid., 381-382

abolish boundaries altogether. Most wished to erect new ones".²⁷

This description of the individualism which has characterised Protestantism in general and Nonconformity in particular - "Each one now had the right to choose his own traditions, irrespective of state control" - is perhaps merely careless, rather than intentionally misleading; it would be more accurate to say that each one now had the power to choose, "through the exercise of his or her own mental powers". What is certainly illuminating is O'Day's judgement that "Literacy was not essential for independence of mind, but the ready availability of literature pleading every side of a cause must have had a profound influence on the rejection of conformity. One would not conclude that literacy caused dissent, but that it fed dissent".²⁸

Firstly, however, it is essential to clarify what is understood by the term 'education' for the purpose of this study. The impression conveyed by the surviving evidence for the practice of the time is that education was at root perceived as a process of instilling knowledge by methods ranging from relatively crude psychological subtlety to blatantly cruel corporal coercion. Certainly theorists were not lacking to protest against what some of them castigated as unwarrantable violations of the very nature of children; but their prescriptions for eliciting interest, and drawing out and developing

²⁷ R. O'Day, Education and Society 1500-1800: the social foundations of education in early modern Britain (London and New York, Longman Group Ltd., 1982) 24

²⁸ Ibid.

innate abilities, were, it is clear, far more widely honoured in the breach than in the observance. The very concept of education was coloured by the religious assumptions of the age. These assumptions did not of course spring to life, fully developed, solely as a result of the whole range of upheavals encompassed by the portmanteau terms 'Renaissance' and 'Reformation'; although they were necessarily modified by these processes, they had roots stretching back into medieval thought and practice. It is possible to discern different strands in these assumptions. Upper and upper-middle class people flattered themselves that they were favoured with a vocation, a divinely-ordained role in society; for them, education had, by the period of concern to this study, come to be conceived as a time of theoretical preparation for the duties and demands of the vocation they would follow for the rest of their lives. This preparation was, however, very narrow in scope. It consisted almost exclusively of study of the classics and of religion; but it entailed the ability to read, and it is this ability which constitutes common ground with education as understood and valued by the lower social classes, amongst whom the Separatists were very largely to be found.

Of course education and literacy were no more to be identified with each other in early modern England than they are today; but it could be misleading to assume that there was necessarily a distinction between the two in the period under review for the people with whom this study is concerned. Research on literacy,

and notably that published by David Cressy, has revealed the kaleidoscopic and fluid nature of literacy in early modern England. It meant different things for different people, or at least, different groups of people; and these groups were marked out as much by occupation and geographical location, as by anything else. For these reasons it is not helpful to speak of 'mass' literacy, but equally, it is not relevant to limit the concept of literacy to the ability to read. These, however, are general observations. The Separatists' foundation doctrine of the supremacy of Scripture, coupled with their insistence that all believers have an inalienable right of direct personal approach to God, means that whatever else education may have entailed for some of them, for all of them it meant the ability to read God's word for themselves, unmediated by any intervening human agency - "All God's children have the right to read and understand God's word".²⁹ And this was not merely a pious ideal. Chapter 5 of this study documents the interrogation of more than 50 Separatists in prison in London in 1593, almost all of whose depositions reveal the fact that they could read. The point made here is that whatever other skills these people may have acquired to enable them to carry on their trade, or practise their profession, the specific educational competence which as Separatists they not only needed but also, to a very large extent, possessed, was the ability to read.

²⁹

J. Simon, Education and Society in Tudor England (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1966) 403

What they read is perhaps of less significance, but of course very far from being irrelevant. The Bible was obviously their staple, but by no means their only, reading matter. Literacy among the Separatists extended from the near-universal ability to read English, to increasingly rarer competence respectively in reading Latin, Greek and even, in a few cases, Hebrew. The evidence cited in chapter 5 also reveals that the Separatists read the polemical literature produced by the men who articulated their beliefs. In contrast to the opinions of some other writers on this topic, such as Carlson and Foreman, whose views are set out in more detail subsequently, Chapter 5 below demonstrates that those Separatists for whom we have evidence exhibit levels of literacy which, in the context of their time, geographical location and socio-economic status, can in all fairness only be described as relatively high. I go further, and contend that, eschewing literacy as the sole criterion for assessing claims to be educated, the first Separatists may still be credited with relatively high educational standards and achievements. This claim is based on a broader definition of education than that assumed by scholars such as Carlson and Foreman. They effectively limit it to university, or at least grammar school, education. This is unrealistically narrow. There must be as many definitions of 'education' as there are educational theorists; but I would look for a statement which incorporated, among other things, the acquisition, by whatever means, of knowledge (by no means to be limited to facts alone), and the ability to utilise such knowledge and to benefit from its application.

Obviously such a definition lays no claim to either originality or comprehensiveness; but it allows for a flexibility which may justify regarding it as a useful yard-stick for evaluating the extent and depth of awareness of issues amongst any given population. In the case of the Separatists it certainly allows for the literacy which enabled them to read their Bibles and the apologetic and polemical literature which their protagonists produced. Equally, it encompasses the writing skills which enabled such literature to be produced; but its value lies in the fact that it goes well beyond the merely mechanistic manifestations of education, and the ability to acquire it. It allows for such higher competences as the ability to listen with understanding, to absorb and comprehend what has been heard, to make it one's own, and to accept its influence and effect upon one's thinking, attitudes, values and actions. If this be granted, then it is clear that men who were able to resist the enormous pressures of the law-enshrined and physically-enforced constructs of the society in which they lived, and strike out on their own with radically different concepts which were bound to incur the wrath of the authorities - who could only view such innovations as threats to their own power - must have been, by any-one's standards, and in the highest and widest senses of the term, well-educated people.

It is worth bearing in mind one further observation before investigating in detail the evidence relating to the early modern English Separatists and their attitudes to education. Interest in, and

support for, education was not a constant, but a variable, dependent largely on perceptions as to its utility - perceptions which could, and did, change with changing circumstances; and this was as true of Separatists as of any other group of people. It has sometimes erroneously been assumed that education was promoted by its advocates as an agent of revolutionary change, whereas it was in fact almost always both regarded as, and effective as, a means of social control. It is instructive to note the change in perceptions of education between sixteenth-century thinkers and writers, who generally regarded it as a cure for social problems, and their seventeenth-century successors, who tended to the opinion that it was a cause of them.

It may well be that there is another tension underlying the relationship between education and the first Separatists. In the eyes of the authorities, religious dissent went beyond being unacceptably radical; they regarded it as dangerously revolutionary - the strength of their reaction to it when they were able to run it to ground testifies to the truth of that statement. In fact, however, education tended to be a conservative factor in society. Thus the impact of early Separatism may have been weakened by its being simultaneously pulled in opposite directions, the thrust of religious radicalism on the one hand being countered by the drag of social conservatism on the other. This might go part of the way towards accounting for a certain ambivalence in the differing attitudes of the separatists to education. Any such ambivalence is not attributable

solely to the point made in the course of this thesis, namely, that education was neither the original, nor the prime, concern of the Separatists; but it does not invalidate the conclusion that it is possible to demonstrate a coherent, comprehensive and consistent Separatist philosophy of education.

CHAPTER 1**THE NATURE OF SEPARATISM IN THE PERIOD 1558-1642**

This chapter first seeks to define the ecclesiastical background from which Separatism emerged in sixteenth-century England. This is necessary in order to understand the causes of Separatism, its ethos and nature, and the development of its thought on matters educational. It then investigates the nature and extent of the evidence available, from which conclusions may be drawn and possible answers posited. This will require clarification of late Tudor and early Stuart concepts and terminology, and particularly the Separatists' own understanding of such things as the nature and constitution of the Church, and of authority over the Church, authority within the Church, and the authority of the Church. Notice is next taken of the extent to which the founding fathers of Separatism were themselves educated, and of the general drift of some more recent judgements on the Separatists' attitude to education. The question is then posed as to whether or not it is possible to discern anything approaching a common Separatist attitude towards an educated clergy, and if so, what that attitude was. The various strands of the perceived answers to these questions are then brought together in order to formulate the contention upon which this thesis rests.

It is not intended, however, to be a comprehensive survey of the history of early Separatism, nor an extended exposition of its nature. These have both been done and will no doubt continue to

be done; but the assumption underlying this study is that its subject is of interest in its own right. Nevertheless, the topic cannot be meaningfully considered in isolation from its context. The term 'Separatism' implies a position from which to separate; so reference will be made to both official ecclesiastical theory, and the state-enforced ecclesiastical practice which prevailed in England between the accession of Elizabeth I in 1558 and the outbreak of the First Civil War in 1642.

English religious Dissent emerges as an identifiable phenomenon in the second half of the sixteenth century; but its essential characteristic, namely, freedom to obey what was believed to be the will of Christ, whether or not human authority in church or state concurred, has been discerned by some writers as a persistent trait throughout the whole course of Christian history, though inevitably more conspicuous at some times, and less so at others. R.W. Dale for instance,¹ claimed to detect principles analogous to those later asserted by English Congregationalism in 2nd century Montanism, 3rd century Novatianism, 4th century Donatism, and medieval free religious communities such as the Waldenses. C.S. Horne,² H.W. Clark,³ and W.B. Selbie⁴ all agreed in attributing to

¹ R.W. Dale, A History of English Congregationalism, (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1907)

² C.S. Horne, A Popular History of the Free Churches (London, Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1903)

³ H.W. Clark, History of English Nonconformity, (London, Chapman and Hall, 1911)

John Wyclif (c. 1329-1384) a direct influence on the thought and teaching of the first early modern English Separatists. Christopher Haigh endorses their view: "Wycliffe's stress on the authority of the Bible, and the provision by his Oxford disciples of an English translation, gave literate laypeople the opportunity of religious independence."⁵ However, Wyclif's work made a greater impact on the continent, notably, of course, in Bohemia, through the adoption of his ideas by Jan Hus (c. 1369-1415) and his followers, than it did in England; but Wyclif foreshadowed the emphases of sixteenth-century English Separatists in his appeal to the Bible as the only authoritative guide for Christian faith and practice, his denial of the doctrine of transubstantiation, his attack on the institution of the papacy, his repudiation of indulgences, and his desire to abolish religious orders. H.B. Workman presents another view of Wyclif. He concedes that "On some sides in the daring of his concepts, he is a nonconformist of nonconformists, a modernist of the moderns"⁶; but in the end, he concludes that Wyclif was a medievalist.

R. O'Day draws attention to the perceptions of the men who were virtually contemporaneous with events. She quotes the comments

⁴ W.B. Selbie, Nonconformity, (London, Williams and Norgate, 1912)

⁵ C. Haigh, English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993)

⁶ H.B. Workman, John Wyclif, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1926) I, 7

of Dr. Peter Heylyn (1600-1662), writing in 1627:

I fell upon a different way from that of Doctor Prideaux, the Professor [Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford], in his lecture "De Visibilitate Ecclesiae" ... in which the visibility of the Protestant Church ... was no otherwise proved, than by looking for it in the scattered conventicles of the Berengarians in Italy, the Waldenses in France, the Wicklifists [sic] in England, and the Hussites in Bohemia.⁷

Workman's judgement that it was not mainly from Wyclif, nor yet from Lollardy, that English Nonconformity originated, is more widely accepted by modern scholars. Note should however be taken of Christopher Haigh's comment that "The old Lollard heresy had been revitalized by the emergence of evangelists from the universities"; but he concedes that "the heretics had so far made little progress."⁸

E.A. Payne comments

The source ... of the English Free Churches cannot be sought in any one place. Their antecedents were many and various. Wyclif as well as Luther, Huss as well as Calvin, Hubmaier as well as Menno Simons, contributed consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, to the stand taken by Robert Browne and his friends, even though it was finally independent study of the Bible, and Elizabeth's determination to secure national uniformity both religiously and politically, that caused the Puritan and Separatist movement to develop as it did.⁹

⁷ R. O'Day, The Debate on the English Reformation (London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1986) 32, quoting J. C. Robertson (ed.), Ecclesia Restaurata (1661): 2 vols. Cambridge Ecclesiastical History Society, 1849) 10

⁸ C. Haigh, op. cit., 88

⁹ E.A. Payne, The Free Church Tradition in the Life of England (London, SCM Press Ltd., 1944) 28

Payne's judgement is endorsed by Doran and Durston: "[They] drew their inspiration from a variety of sources - Lollard, Lutheran, Swiss Reformed, even Anabaptist. The eclectic nature of their beliefs makes them difficult to categorize, for they differed as much among themselves as from Catholics."¹⁰

O'Day also draws attention to William Tyndale's view as to the influences which produced the English Reformation and the Separatism which soon sprang from it.

For Tyndale, the study of history had demonstrated that kings could not reform the church. Instead, the church's hopes for renewal lay with individual Christians and their determination to divert her paths back to those of righteousness. In Tyndale, we have an early example of the reluctance of Protestant historians to accept the 'official' reformation instigated by Henry VIII and his successors as a reformation at all. For Tyndale, the blood of the martyrs was indeed the seed of the church. Without it, no reformation flowers would bloom.¹¹

R. Tudur Jones takes consideration of the issue further by suggesting an explanation as to why Separatists were willing to offer their blood as the seed of the church.

The men and women who had dared to gather together in the 'privy church' in London during the Marian persecution and had seen their Minister, John Rough and their deacon Cuthbert Symson witness to their faith with their lives could hardly be expected to look upon the Elizabethan reformation as the answer

¹⁰ S. Doran and C. Durston, Princes, Pastors and People: The Church and Religion in England 1529-1689 (London, Routledge, 1991) 97

¹¹ R. O'Day, op.cit., 10

to their prayers... To them, it was very different from the pattern to be discerned in the Bible.¹²

The emphasis on the centrality of the Bible for the first Separatists from Elizabeth I's religious settlement, and its supremacy for them as the sole authority for all questions of belief and behaviour, is the single most striking and consistent characteristic of these groups from the moment when "they were dragged from their voluntary obscurity to answer for their temerity before the ecclesiastical authorities".¹³ It was their doctrine of Scripture which gave them homogeneity, and more than anything else forged them into a movement with "a coherent ideological basis".¹⁴

It has been maintained that "The one definite thing which can be said about the Reformation in England is that it was an act of state"¹⁵ - although O'Day has marshalled impressive evidence which profoundly modifies this unwisely dogmatic statement. The stand that Robert Browne and his colleagues took was based on their deep conviction that the state settlement of religion, which was one of the most urgent priorities, and one of the first achievements, of the early years of Elizabeth I's reign, was incomplete. It was "a mere half-way house between Rome and Geneva... The

¹² R. Tudur Jones, Congregationalism in England 1662-1962 (London, Independent Press Ltd., 1962) 13-14

¹³ Ibid., 14

¹⁴ Idem

¹⁵ F.M. Powicke, The Reformation in England, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1941) 1

unforgivable error of these men was that they took religion seriously, and desired a further reformation according to the Word of God".¹⁶ To this extent, they shared common ground with the Puritans, who also wanted to reform the liturgy, discipline and government of the church according to the 'pure' Word of God - hence of course the name. They were influenced by the thoroughgoing reformation which John Calvin had put in hand at Geneva during the years of his dominance there between 1541 and 1564. Geneva proved to be both a magnet and a haven for English Protestants whose views were too radical to be accommodated comfortably in the church in England, particularly during the harsh persecution of the reign of Mary I. Returning exiles, including men of the stature of William Whittington, Dean of Durham, and Bishop Coverdale, hailed the accession of Elizabeth I in 1558 as the longed-for dawn of a new era of hope and enlightenment in the church. They were, however, disappointed. The Act of Uniformity of 1559 established a state church with the crown as its head, and an episcopal government. It was, and is, lauded as a via media; but it was primarily a political compromise, and Puritans were from the start dissatisfied with it. E.A. Payne¹⁷ characterises it as "astutely conceived", which may go some way to accounting for its durability. Doran and Durston take the story further with their comment that "James' church ... was ... broad enough to contain

¹⁶ H. Davies, The English Free Churches (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1952) 1-2

¹⁷ E.A. Payne, op. cit., 31

all but the most extreme of radicals, and ... nonconformity remained a relatively insignificant force."¹⁸

The years lengthened into decades, and as Elizabeth's 'settlement' of religion showed signs first of being tolerated, and then, however unenthusiastically, accepted, the Puritan party split. Conforming Puritans remained within the Church of England, waiting for an opportunity to carry reformation further forward from within its ranks; but the more radical, rallying behind Robert Browne's famous call for 'reformation without tarrying for anie', separated themselves from the state church. It was their action which launched the distinctive Christian witness which has been successively labelled Separatism, Dissent, Nonconformity and, in the 20th century, the English Free Churches. It is not too much of a simplification to say that as Puritanism evolved out of Protestantism, so Separatism evolved out of Puritanism.

But why exactly did the Separatists separate? Most fortuitously, a direct and concise answer is available to that question in the writings of Henry Barrow. His career is noticed in more detail in chapter 3 below. Among his writings, most of which were smuggled out of prison and printed and published by friends in Holland, was Four Causes of Separation, his earliest known work, dating from 1587. It begins with a succinct statement of its contents (spelling modernised):

¹⁸

S. Doran and C. Durston, op. cit., 110

Four principal and weighty causes why every-one that knoweth God and acknowledgeth the Lord Jesus, or seeketh salvation in him, ought speedily without any delay to forsake those disordered and ungodly and unholy synagogues, and the false teachers of these times as they generally stand in England.

1. The false manner of worshipping the true God.
2. The profane and ungodly people received into and retained in the bosom and body of their churches.
3. The false and antichristian ministry imposed upon their churches.
4. The false and antichristian government wherewith their churches are ruled.

Although polemical in tone, Barrow's pamphlet is, in the broadest sense of the term, 'educational' in both intention and effect. He concedes that Anglicans worship the true God; but they do so in a false manner, since their worship is based on the Book of Common Prayer, which, in the strong language customary in his time, he characterises as "a piece of swine's flesh, Dagon's stump, a device of men, a human invention, a false idol, a mark of the beast, an abominable sacrifice unto the Lord".

Barrow holds that the principle of membership in the established church is wrong. L.H. Carlson summarises his objections:

The parish churches are geographical and ecclesiastical units. Membership is legal, comprehensive, required and automatic ... churches are a spiritual hodge-podge, composed of unwilling and ungodly persons, comprised of the profane and secular, of the indifferent and the hostile, of cool disbelievers and luke-warm Laodiceans ... all are baptised and made automatic members, regardless of profession, practice or protest. Baptism is general, and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is almost general ... only a few egregious persons are excluded and ... the power of excommunication is exercised by the hierarchical

courts rather than by the minister and the congregation.

The ministry of the Church of England is antichristian, false and unscriptural, in reference to the calling of clergymen (the ministers have not been rightly called by God, and therefore, their entrance into the sheepfold of Christ is not in accordance with the laws and ordinances of the Scripture), to the method of selection (their selection has not been made by the congregation, but by the bishop or the patron, who has imposed them upon the people, and therefore is a violation of the true canons of ministerial election), and to the mode of financial support (since they are supported by tithes, endowments and wages, instead of by the free-will offerings of the faithful members, their subjection to the Old Testament system of Hebrew tithes instead of to the New Testament dispensation of voluntary support is disgraceful and discreditable).¹⁹

Carlson summarises Barrow's criticism of the government of the Church of England by describing it as

the method of governing the churches through an episcopal system, including the hated spiritual courts that exercise a secular and profitable jurisdiction. The true head of the church is Christ, not the Queen. Prince and Parliament are not the source of ecclesiastical law and their regulations do not take priority over the commands of God Himself. Reformation must proceed without tarrying for any permission from the magistrate ... progress is not effected by petitions to legislatures or suits to parliament. The apostles planted the Gospel without the sanction of governments, and the Christian church developed in the face of opposition and bitter persecution. The prince or magistrate or lord or commoner is subject to the law of Christ and the kings of men are subservient to the King of kings, Who yields not His sceptre to any man ... God's law is higher than man's law ... Christ endowed His

¹⁹

L.H. Carlson (ed.), The Writings of Henry Barrow 1587-1590, Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts III (London, George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1962) 6

government with divine power and majesty. No minister can serve two masters, and if man-made government imposes itself upon the servants of Christ, they are enjoined to resist it and to serve Christ only. The government of Christ's church as revealed in the New Testament, consists of pastors and doctors, elders and deacons, and is permanent, perpetual and prescriptive. If Christ cannot rule through His own officers, He is dethroned, and anti-Christ rules in His stead. Christian liberty is a precious legacy, subject to no restrictions, and is to be defended unto death. Christ's government is the guardian of that liberty, is immutable, all-embracing, and divinely sanctioned.

The Separatists, then, did not separate only because of their perception that Elizabeth's Anglican Church was a political compromise. "'We in England are so far off from having a Church rightly reformed, according to the prescript of God's word, that as yet we are scarce come to the outward face of the same', wailed the authors of An Admonition to the Parliament in 1572."²⁰ E.A. Payne makes the point that "it was their consciences and not their political interests that dictated their opposition".²¹ He lays squarely at the door of the established church responsibility for the evolution of disputes over secondary matters such as vestments, ceremonial, etc., into controversies over order, discipline and doctrine. Puritans within and without Anglicanism shared a common conviction of the authority of the Bible as the Word of God, containing "the divine pattern for ecclesiastical government, worship and discipline, as well as for belief", and being "authoritative for every aspect of

²⁰ C. Haigh, op. cit., 294

²¹ E.A. Payne, op. cit., 31

ecclesiastical and common life".²² William Ames may stand as representative of the Puritan view of the Scriptures:

they doe as well pertaine to the instructing of all the faithful through all ages, as if they had been specially directed to them ... The Scripture is not partiall, but a perfect rule of faith and manners: neither is there here anything that is constantly and everywhere to be observed in the Church of God, which depends either upon tradition, or upon any authority whatsoever, and is not contained in the Scriptures".²³

The quotation is important because it highlights the difference between the Puritan, who held the doctrine of the absolute authority of the Bible, outlined above, and the Anglican, well represented by Richard Hooker's contention that while "the outstanding ordinances of Christian worship are prescribed by the Bible, times, ceremonies and circumstances are rightly to be decided by the rulers of the church with due deference to the traditions of antiquity and the use of right reason." The Anglican apologists were the upholders of the rights of human reason, believing that because revelation and reason are the gifts of the same Divine Author, everything revealed by God must be conformable to human reason. "When both sides agree that these are the words of God", argues Jeremy Taylor,²⁴ "and the question of faith is concerning the meaning of the words, nothing is an

²² H. Davies, op. cit., 3

²³ W. Ames, The Marrow of Sacred Divinity, (London, Iohn Rothwell, 1643) 169-170

²⁴ J. Taylor, edd. R. Heber and C. Eden, Doctor Dubitantium (London, 1851 ed.), IX 74

article of faith, or a part of religion, but what can be proved by reason to be the sense and intentions of God". The Puritans objected that this was to make a faulty human instrument a judge over revelation. Human reason, as a consequence of the Fall, was distorted by original sin. Taylor appealed in vain to the treasured experience of antiquity and the nobility of human reason, for the Puritan knew the perversity of the human mind. He took his restatements of the doctrine of the authority of the Biblical revelation and of original sin from Calvin's Geneva. His mental journey, as a product of the Renaissance, might take him to Athens, but Geneva was his destination.²⁵

But if it was his doctrine of Scripture that marked the Puritan off from the Anglican, it was his doctrine of the Church that marked the Separatist off from the Puritan. Puritan and Separatist were alike agreed that the root cause of the Reformation, and its continuing raison d'être, was adherence to the Word of God; they parted company over the question as to how far that principle was to be carried. The conforming Puritan was content that it should extend as far as the determination of doctrine, while still leaving the church free to continue with ceremonies and customs (many of them, of course, hallowed by centuries of tradition), provided they were not actually prohibited by the letter of Scripture, or contrary to its spirit. This was anathema to the nonconforming Puritan. Anything in the buildings, liturgy and worship of the church, as well

²⁵

H. Davies, op. cit., 3-4



as its doctrine, government and discipline, which could not be justified directly from the Bible was disobedience to the revealed will of God, a disobedience which must bring with it its own fearsome retribution. The history of religious dissent in the reign of Elizabeth I is in effect the history of the emergence of the unshakeable conviction that the fundamental Reformation principle of the supremacy of Scriptures (scriptura sola) must apply to every area of Christian life, corporate as well as personal, the church just as much as the individual believer.

The attraction of Anglicanism was its pragmatism, its practical realism; in the circumstances pertaining in England in the second half of the sixteenth century, it was "the art of the politically possible". The appeal of Separatism was its intellectual honesty, its irresistible logic - a trait only to be expected, perhaps, in a system of thought and action deriving in large measure from the Frenchman Jean Cauvin. Certainly the Separatists accepted without flinching the full implications of the doctrine of the supreme authority of the Word of God. So convinced were they of the all-surpassing value of this one pearl of great price, that they were prepared to jettison everything else, if need be, in the interest of the over-riding passion to honour God by obedience to His Word. In common, of course, with Protestants of every hue, they studied the text of the Bible assiduously; but they were dismayed by the yawning disparity they perceived between the primitive church portrayed in the pages of the New Testament, and the semi-reformed Anglican Church they

observed steadily entrenching itself in their own time and place. They felt themselves compelled, almost in spite of themselves, to think the unthinkable. Bracing themselves to face the harsh persecution which was as swift and merciless as it was predictable, they proclaimed the doctrine of the gathered church, which was in direct opposition to the theory of the inclusive church which had prevailed ever since Constantine the Great made Christianity the official state religion of the Roman Empire early in the fourth century A.D.

C. Burrage makes the point that

the idea of what may be termed a Congregational Church did not originate with Robert Browne. Long before he organized his 'companie' in Norwich, there had been congregational churches in England of certain types, but they were not exactly what are meant by the expression Congregational Church today, a society of Separatists with a particular kind of church organization; and when Robert Browne advanced his own opinions, they naturally reflected to some extent views that had earlier been held by other English congregations ... There was ... a congregation composed of ... Protestant members of the Church of England that met in and about London during the greater part of [Mary's] reign. It was finally betrayed into the hands of Bonner, Bishop of London, about 1557 or 1558 by one Roger Sergeant ... The English service as expressed in the second Prayer Book of Edward VI was used by this church, which appears to have varied in numbers from twenty to about two hundred, and to have greatly increased in size towards the end of Mary's reign ... It is clear that the congregation were not separatists from the Church of England in any modern sense, but only objected to Roman Catholic domination. As soon as this was removed its pastor, and probably the people, returned to the church ... At Stoke in Suffolk, there appears to have been a similar congregation in or about 1558. These people were chiefly women ... Of course it is understood that this congregation like that in London

was composed of members of the Church of England who separated only from the Roman Catholic domination, and that it probably had no fixed or settled form of organization; but later reformers like Browne must have been aware of the proceedings of these earlier congregations whose existence and experiences had become known through the first (Latin) edition of Foxe's great work.²⁶

The point is valuably made that "the wise observer of Elizabethan religion will resist the temptation to impose on a confused scene the clear-cut pattern of denominations not yet born";²⁷ and "at this primitive stage these groups were not identified with any very definite or exclusive church principle ... transient congregations were probably a recurrent element in Elizabethan London life".²⁸ Nevertheless, development into a recognisable organism was both steady and relatively rapid. "A score of ministers served secret Protestant groups at home ... There was a London congregation with a varying membership of between forty and a hundred (and up to 200 late in the reign), which met clandestinely on ships and at private houses: its ministers were, in turn, Edmund Scambler, Thomas Foule, John Rough, Augustine Bernher, and Thomas Bentham. Another London conventicle was broken up on New Year's Eve 1554."²⁹ It is true that there is to date little evidence of

²⁶ C. Burrage, The Early English Dissenters in the light of recent research 1550-1641 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2 vols., 1912) I 69-70

²⁷ P. Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement (London, Jonathan Cape, 1967) 28

²⁸ Ibid., 88

²⁹ C. Haigh, op. cit., 228

continuous Separatist structures persisting until after 1640; Doran and Durston point out, however, that "While Separatism was able to re-establish itself in several parts of the country, it made little headway in terms of conversions," and "In the period before 1625, this Separatist movement grew only very slowly, acquiring no more than 150 members throughout the whole country."³⁰ But then, "Largely as a reaction to Laudian ecclesiastical policies ... Separatism proliferated during the 1630's. By 1640, there appear to have been some ten Separatist congregations in London, as well as meetings for worship in a growing number of provincial centres, particularly in Kent and East Anglia."³¹ Against these comments must be set Collinson's observation that

In June 1567 about a hundred of these godly Londoners were apprehended by the Sheriff ... In the following March six of the eight spokesmen for this group reappear in a list of seventy-seven persons arrested on premises near the Savoy. Their homes were in no less [sic] than forty-two separate streets and localities ... It seems reasonably clear that in all these places and on all these occasions we are coming across what was essentially the same congregation, created by the stimulating experience of persecution ... These people ... had not separated from their parish churches or assembled in private houses so long as they had preaching and the administration of the sacraments 'without the preferring of idolatrous gear about it, ... They recalled that there was 'a congregation of us in this city in Queen Mary's days' ... so they revived the Marian 'privy churches'.³²

³⁰ S. Doran and C. Durston, op. cit., 110

³¹ Ibid., 111

³² Idem, quoting from A parte of a register contayninge sundrie memorable matters, written by divers godly and learned in our time, which stande for and desire the reformation of our Church, in discipline and

It does, however, appear to be the case that while there were Dissenting meetings, they were overwhelmingly additional to existing Anglican services. On the other hand there

were already virtual sectarians before the crisis of 1566 ... but ... there is no evidence ... that they had consciously made an irrevocable act of secession. On the contrary, their apology implied that they would return to their parishes when they could hear sound preachers who were not obliged to wear 'idolatrous gear'. Meanwhile they had taken no steps to elect their own officers or otherwise to set up an independent sectarian organisation ... they counted as true churches of God those congregations of the Church of England where godly preachers had banished popish ceremony and preached true doctrine."³³

Notwithstanding the apparent flexibility of attitude suggested by this comment, incipient organisation and embryonic structure were making their appearance before the decade was out. "After ... April 1569 ... some ... went beyond this position and separated themselves from the establishment. Their gathered church was now supplied with a form of covenant, subscribed by the members on their admission, and with elected officers and the discipline of excommunication".³⁴

ceremonies, according to the pure worde of God, and the lawe of our lande (Edinburgh or Middleburg (?) 1593) 23-27: reprinted, The Remains of Edmund Grindal, D.D., (ed. W. Nicholson, Parker Society, 1843)

³³ Ibid., 89

³⁴ Ibid., 90

The Separatists themselves apparently felt a need to justify their action in disrupting the religious uniformity which Elizabeth I's ministers attempted to impose on the country. Understandably, the reasons advanced in defence of separation from the state church were not expressed in dangerous political terms, but in religious ones - which, however, as the Separatists rapidly discovered, endangered their liberty and lives fully as much as political ones would have done. But what did Separatism actually entail? At bottom, it meant refusal to submit to the pressures of political expediency, or the demands of ecclesiastical state-craft; it meant loyalty to conscience, no matter how its dictates were conceived or even, possibly, misconceived. Collinson implicitly acknowledges this when he observes that

Those who held that the ceremonies and the polity of the Elizabethan settlement were actually unlawful had never found it easy to justify their participation in the sacraments and fellowship of the parish churches. With characteristic Elizabethan pragmatism, their presence in the national church implied the optimistic presumption that further reformation and the removal of offence would not be long delayed. [But] They could not prolong indefinitely the acceptance of an alien system which they had no power to alter ... they had either to choose the separatist way or to assimilate the subtle thinking of the non-separating congregationalists who denied that the ecclesiastical laws of the realm either made or unmade the churches of God in England in their true essence."³⁵

He is writing of the position of radical Puritans in the aftermath of the Hampton Court Conference of 1604, but his words may be

projected back before that date without doing violence to their application. There are, however, conflicting assessments of the motivation underlying separation. Collinson declares that

The quarrel of the Separatists with the more conservative preachers was about the attitude to be adopted towards the 'traditioners', not about the constitution of the ideal church ... Where the surplice and other ceremonies were forced onto a congregation ... it might be at the expense of ... the repulsion of the godly into actual schism, as happened in London in the aftermath of 1566. We may well wonder whether it was not in similar circumstances that every early movement of separation had its origin.³⁶

But Furnivall's edition of Stubb's Second part of the anatomie of abuses asks,

What say you to a seignory or eldership? Were it not good for the state of the church at this day that the same were established in every congregation as it was in the apostles' days? What is your judgement, ought there to be any bishops in the churches of Christians? ... for some hold that there ought to be equality in the ministry, and no superiority at all. How say you?³⁷

Matters such as these were clearly of greater weight than disputes over ornaments and ceremonies.

But there was, and is, more to the rationale of Separatism even than that. The concept of covenant was, and has remained, a bedrock principle of Separatism. It was deemed to be revealed in Scripture as the basis and pattern of God's relationship with

³⁶ Ibid., 91, 96

³⁷ Ibid., 101

mankind and therefore also of His intention for relationships between His people. In the Old Testament the covenant was conceived as consisting in God's acknowledgement of those who kept His law as His own people. The intractable fact that in practice God's laws are never completely obeyed by any-one was accommodated over the centuries by a steady reduction in the concept of the covenant people from the whole human race, through the Chosen People of the Jews, to the Faithful Remnant of Israel, and finally to the one man Jesus, Who alone completely fulfilled God's law. In common with all who derived their theology from Geneva, the Separatists understood the covenant still to consist in human response to divine self-revelation; but that response was now expressed as the act of accepting by faith what God Himself had done for them, rather than the futile struggle to do anything which would obligate God to accept them. Such acceptance in mutual trust must also, the Separatists believed, underlie the relationship between all the 'godly' in 'true' churches.

The Separatists were also considerably exercised by the thorny problem of ecclesiastical discipline. Collinson³⁸ is of the opinion that concern for true discipline in the Body of Christ was of such importance to them as to rank as one of the justifications for taking the very serious step of seceding from the state church. Indeed, he describes it as the very nub of the Separatist case against the establishment, though this is contentious. The Separatists were

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Ibid., 90

not of course unique in holding a high doctrine of ecclesiastical discipline - "it was commonly declared, in formal confessional statements, that discipline was an essential mark or token of the presence of the Church of God";³⁹ but they were very unhappy with the perfunctory and indiscriminating manner in which they considered it was exercised in the Church of England. Henry Barrow's indictment may stand as representative of their case; he told Mr. Spering, in their conference at the Fleet Prison on 14 March 1590, "Your parish ... consisteth of a confuse company ... all generally without the knowledge, faith, or fear of God, without care of this life or of the life to come; to all which you indifferently administer and sell your sacraments, delivering them in a false manner, not according to Christ's Testament".⁴⁰ The prominence and frequency of the Separatists' appeals to Scripture in support of their assertions could well lead to the presumption that it was their view of the Bible and its authority which was the starting point of their ideology; but this is not in fact the case. They deliberately separated themselves from the church as established by law in England because they felt a deep and growing conviction as to the nature of the church which made it ultimately impossible for them to remain in an organisation constructed on a fundamentally antithetical basis; e.g.,

³⁹ Ibid., 347

⁴⁰ L.H. Carlson (ed.), The Writings of John Greenwood 1587-1590, Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts IV (London, George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1962) 183-185

I have now joyned my self to the Church of Christ wherein I have yielded my selfe subject to the discipline of Gods Word as I promised at my Baptisme, which if I should now again forsake and joyne myself with the traditioners, I should then forsake the union wherein I am knyt with the body of Christ and joyne my selfe to the discipline of Antichrist. For in the church of the traditioners there is none other Discipline, but that which hath bene ordeined by the Antichristian popes of Rome, wherby the Church of God hath allwaies benn afflicted, and is to this day, for which I refuse them.⁴¹

They were distressed, even angered, by the half-baked nature of the reforms accepted by Anglicanism. John Robinson spoke for all of them when he described the Church of England as 'the state ecclesiastical'.⁴² They could perceive no radical change in the theory of the nature of the church, its theology, its structure, its composition, its relation to the state, its attitude to the world - not even in such obvious external indicators as the form of its worship, its administration of the sacraments or the physical ordering of its buildings. In all these things the Separatists could see only surface tinkering, superficial adjustments, uneasy compromises with what they considered to be the sub-Christian standards of the life of the world in which the church was set.

⁴¹ A. Peel (ed.) The Seconde Parte of a Register, being a Calendar of Manuscripts under that title intended for publication by the Puritans about 1593 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2 vols., 1915) 55: No. 32 - A Treatise by a Member of a Separatist Congregation, c. 1567-1571

⁴² C. Hill, The Century of Revolution 1603-1714 2nd ed., (London, Routledge, 1980) 66

The Separatists' assertion that the church is Christ's was not in itself a bone of contention. Puritans, Anglicans and Roman Catholics all paid lip-service to the Apostle Paul's statement that Christ is "the head of the body, the church".⁴³ Needless to say, however, all hinged, as it still does, on the way in which that basic statement was understood and developed. The root difference between the Separatist and the non-Separatist doctrines of the church was the former's insistence that the church is called out of the world. The concept was quite simply one of exclusivity; the Separatists implemented literally Paul's injunction to "Come away and leave them, separate yourselves".⁴⁴ A constant theme in the Separatists' refrain of criticism of Anglicanism was its inclusivity. A. Tovey made the point in his 1993 Congregational Lecture, - "The Separatists ... complained bitterly about the establishment view of the coterminous nature of church and state; the official position in Elizabethan England was that the church was simply the state in its religious aspect: to be born an Englishman meant that one was an Anglican".⁴⁵ Furthermore, one would be unable to avoid remaining so for the rest of one's life, unless formally excommunicated - which was an occurrence so rare as to be

⁴³ The Letter to the Colossians, chapter 1, verse 18 (New English Bible, Oxford and Cambridge, 1961)

⁴⁴ The Second Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 6, verse 17 (New English Bible, Oxford and Cambridge, 1961) quoting Isaiah chapter 52, verse 11

⁴⁵ A. Tovey, "Whatever happened to the Separatists?" The Congregational Lecture 1993 (London, The Congregational Memorial Hall Trust (1978) Limited, 1993) 7

virtually unheard of. Peel and Carlson summarise Harrison's writing on this point thus: "The Church of England ... cannot be the true church because it is filled with manifest pollutions. It is all too clear that persons deserving excommunication are not removed, but are allowed to remain in the fold. Thus, the few corrupt the many".⁴⁶ The classical Separatist conception of the church was that of 'a garden walled around'.⁴⁷ Against the Anglican view that all were in the church unless they positively opted out, the Separatists insisted that none were members of the church unless they positively opted in. They accepted that their doctrine of the exceptionally high standards required of people 'called to be saints' necessarily entailed both the theory and practice of rigorous discipline. Contemporary observers considered their view on the matter to be one of the most significant reasons for the Separatists distancing themselves from the other religious groups of their time. A letter from Richard Baxter to John Swinfen contains the comment "the non-exercise of it [discipline] continueth the Independents' withdrawing more than any distance in principals [sic]". Collinson draws attention to the strength of this issue: "In the semi-separatist groups which soon developed there was great emphasis on discipline ... stating its necessity as a principal cause of ...

⁴⁶ A. Peel and L.H. Carlson (eds.), The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne, Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts II (London, George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1953) 10

⁴⁷ The Song of Solomon, chapter 4, verses 12-16 (New English Bible, Oxford and Cambridge, 1970)

separation."⁴⁸ His judgement is endorsed by Hill:

The decision of sectaries to contract out of the state church ... had revolutionary implications for society, not least in its effect on excommunication. The early Brownists advocated separation from all churches where excommunication was not an effective sentence. The early Independents also thought of excommunication as a spiritual sanction. The records of the early Baptist churches deal with little except excommunication. Excommunication from a voluntary congregation ... lost all that aroma of financial exploitation which clung round the courts of the established church. The members of the congregations decide for themselves what is sinful and what is not."⁴⁹

This position had profound consequences for the Separatists' doctrine of the sacraments. If the church may indeed only be entered by a conscious choice and an exercise of the will, then, as John Smyth and his followers quickly realised, all who could not, for whatever reason, take such rational decisions, were debarred from membership. Apart from the mentally retarded, or unsound, the most immediately obvious group of such people comprised the entire population below whatever might be regarded as the age of sufficient discernment in these matters. This view of the church resulted in an early demonstration of that endemic tendency to fissiparousness which has been at once both a bane and a strength of English religious Dissent. Within a little less than half a century of the date of surviving records of the first early modern Separatist

⁴⁸ P. Collinson, op. cit., 116

⁴⁹ C. Hill, Society and Puritanism in pre-revolutionary England (London, Secker and Warburg, 1964) 379

Church, the Baptists appeared as a distinct group, differing from the Separatist roots from which they sprang, not in matters of faith or order, liturgy or government, but only in their understanding of the characteristics of persons fit and proper to be designated 'saints' - i.e., members of the church, called out of the world, called to be holy. Given the common Separatist premise as to the nature of the church, there is a certain logic about the Baptist conclusion that the sacrament of Christian initiation should be administered only to consenting adults; but it fails to take into account the doctrine that the covenant of grace is with believers 'and their children', which is presented visually every time a child of believers is baptised.

Early Separatist views of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper were also derived from the Separatists' convictions as to the nature of the church. Peel and Carlson represent Harrison as denying the validity of the Anglican communion rite on the ground that

sacraments are seals of the promises made by God to the church. Since the Church of England is a false church" [a position which Harrison has already established, since it persecutes the Church of Christ - presumably the Separatists themselves] "it has received no promises. Hence, there are no true seals, and their alleged sacraments are but dead signs. The Church of England, he asserts, does not discriminate between the true believers and the mere hangers-on. Occasionally, he admits, a parish clergyman prohibits some egregious sinner, such as a well-known whore-monger, from participation in the Lord's Supper. But other persons, far worse, whose sins are more of the spirit than of the flesh, more sly, secretive and diabolical, are readily admitted to participation in the sacrament.⁵⁰

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A. Peel and L.H. Carlson, op. cit., 11-12

Harrison was not alone in his exposition of the nature of the church. Robert Browne also addressed the question, "What is the true Church of Christ?" The question was as fully seminal for the pioneer English religious Dissenters as was the question as to the fundamental authority for Christian belief and behaviour. Thomas Cartwright, the leading English Presbyterian in the second half of the sixteenth century, attempted to hold a mid-way position between thorough-going Anglican inclusivity and uncompromising Separatist exclusivity. In his reply to a letter to him from Robert Harrison, he suggested that even if there was only one 'true believer' in an assembly of many 'unfaithful members', that assembly should be regarded as a true church, for the sake of the one genuine believer. Browne, however, would have none of this. For him, the only true churches were those consisting solely of people whose verbal profession and manner of life converged in conclusive witness to the reality of their faith. If Browne's premise be granted, it is not difficult to follow the logic which culminated in the mid-seventeenth century in the extreme position that only 'the godly' should govern - the state, as well as the church; but of course Browne's view was flawed from the outset, because it is simply impossible to be assured of the perfection of every individual member of the church.

There was, however, another consequence of Browne's position on the make-up of the church, which was seminal for the development

of both the Congregational and the Baptist streams in English Dissent. It may be merely idealistic to propound the right of 'the saints' to rule in all areas of life; but if the churches come anywhere near the high standards set for them by Separatist doctrine, it becomes difficult to deny them the right to govern themselves. The Separatists insisted that it is at once both the prerogative and the responsibility of the church to govern itself; but it was the concept of the local congregation which was uppermost in their minds when they used the word 'church'.

Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Presbyterians envisaged a pyramid of ecclesiastical authority, with the local congregation firmly at the bottom of the pile, subject to the whim and fancy of every petty official who could scramble to any position, however lowly, of power deriving from office. The Separatists declared that a true understanding of the nature of the Church required that the establishment pyramid be stood on its head. They insisted that every local congregation had not merely the right, but the obligation, laid on it by the sole Head of the Church, Jesus Christ Himself, to govern itself according to His will and purposes, as it professed to discern these in the Scriptures. Fundamental to their understanding was their conviction that each local congregation is not only 'part' of the Church, nor does it merely 'represent' the Church - it is the Church, all of it, there in its entirety in every particular place.

It followed from this that no individual office-bearer or group of

office-bearers, either in church or state, could presume to exercise authority over the Lord's people; they all of them, from pope to parson - Browne specifically cites the New Testament offices of Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, Teacher and Elder (titles which he was happy with because they had Scriptural validation) - were the servants of the church, not its rulers. They should be chosen by the local congregation, ordained by the local congregation (i.e., in the Separatists' understanding, the whole church) and then their ministry, whatever it might be, honoured by the local congregation, including going to the extent of supporting them if their appointment should preclude them from earning their own living in the world. Furthermore, the matter of disciplining office-holders, whenever that might become necessary, was once again held to be the responsibility of the entire local congregation - and of them alone. It is deeply significant that the generic terms which soon emerged among the Separatists for individual office-bearers ('minister') and groups of office-bearers ('deacons') both mean 'servant[s]'.

It is seriously misleading to employ the word 'democracy' to describe the government of the whole church by the whole church. The word carries a connotation today which would probably have been abhorrent, and might have been incomprehensible, to the founding fathers of English religious Dissent. No less an authority than Christopher Hill is wrong when he writes "Before 1640 the demand for democracy in the church was as unable to make itself

heard as the demand for democracy in the state".⁵¹ There was no "demand for democracy in the church" before 1640. What there was, was a demand that the freedom of the church, so often used in earlier centuries as a rallying-cry against what was feared to be the encroaching power of the crown, should now be realised to the full by being extended to the whole church, in every local manifestation of it. However, in fairness to him it must be acknowledged that Hill makes a wholly accurate point when he comments that "Ministers ... they thought, should be elected by their congregations. A social revolution was involved in this apparently simple point of conscience".⁵² Indeed it was; but more significantly, it was a theological/ecclesiastical revolution which underlay the more immediately-apparent social revolution. A consistent theme in the first Separatists' criticism of the Anglican settlement was the inadequacy of the Anglican clergy. Harrison represented a fundamental Separatist view when he commented that the Church of England cannot be the true church because its ministers are not sent by God, but derive their authority from the bishops; where archbishops, bishops, deans and chancellors hold the sceptre, as in the Church of England, Harrison is adamant that Christ cannot reign supreme - and it is self-evident that only where He does so can His kingdom prevail. Peel and Carlson point out that

⁵¹ C. Hill, op. cit., 65

⁵² Idem

in his denunciation of the ministers of the Established Church as blind guides, 'dumbe dogges, destroyers and murtherers of soules', Harrison is as guilty of fallacious logic as Browne is; his major premise, quoting St. Paul⁵³ is that no-one can preach unless he be sent. But his minor premise, that the preachers of the Church of England are wicked, is not logically watertight, and his conclusion, that they cannot be sent by God, since God does not send wicked preachers, is therefore invalid.⁵⁴

Harrison is considerably more important for his early exposition of the classical Congregational doctrine of the right government of the church. Contending that in Apostolic times each congregation was a separate independent unit, he lays down three interlocking criteria for true ministry within the church, and right government of the church. These are that the minister must be sent from God, he must be appointed to preach the Gospel, and he must be called by the congregation. This last implies that authority over the church resides in the congregation, and that the minister's power also derives from that source; in the Church of England that power has been usurped by the bishops. Furthermore, both bishops and clergy dislike being reminded of their 'duty', as Harrison sees it, to pursue 'reformation without tarrying for anie'; in response to their timid excuse that they must wait for the warrant of the civil magistrate, Harrison makes the robust retort that in former times kings and princes listened to the voice of God as spoken by prophets and

⁵³ The Letter to the Romans, chapter 10, verse 15 (New English Bible, Oxford and Cambridge, 1961)

⁵⁴ A. Peel and L.H. Carlson, op. cit., 10

priests, but in Elizabethan England prophets and priests meekly submit to the voice of man as expressed by the magistrates. Predictably, Harrison concludes that the church must be liberated from the power of the magistracy, although he does not advocate a complete separation of the two - "And woe unto him, saye I, which shall holde this, and teache men so, that there is no use of the Magistrates sword among Christians. For that is to remoue ye doole [boundary] of the great and large fielde which the Lorde haue measured out unto them."⁵⁵ In fact, Harrison goes further, and urges the magistrates to use their power to extirpate idolatry and destroy abominations - by which he means, of course, those characteristics of the Church of England for which he can find no authority in Scripture, such as deans and deaneries, prebends and prebendships, bishops' chancellors, archdeacons, commissaries, proctors' officials, ecclesiastical courts, canon laws, blind and dumb (i.e., non-preaching) ministers, and the Book of Common Prayer. He holds that it is not the function of the church to interfere, but to keep the sword in Ceasar's hand, and let the true church develop spiritually.

Henry Barrow set out his reasons for separating from the established church in his Profes of Aparant Churche. There is some question as to the authorship of this document. Although he acknowledges that Robert Harrison may have been the author,

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R. Harrison, A little treatise uppon the firste verse of the 122 Psalm (1583)

Carlson⁵⁶ comes down in favour of Henry Barrow on the grounds of the ideas, the strong language, the phrases and the style of writing. He assigns the manuscript to the spring or summer of 1587 on the grounds that it cannot be later than the summer of 1590, when Alison used it to write his A Plaine Confutation of a Treatise of Brownisme. There are references to the persecution of the Church of Christ, but none to imprisonment; there is justification of separation from the established church, and a promise that the Separatists will return to the fold and reform themselves if they can be convinced that they have joined against Christ in any anti-Christian way. On the strength of this evidence Carlson concludes that the time of writing was prior to Barrow's imprisonment on 19 November 1587. Barrow's main work, however, is A Brief Discoverie of the False Church. Carlson describes it as a 'discoverie' in the sense that it is a "disclosure or unmasking of the false church; but it is not brief".⁵⁷ The original printed edition runs to some 270 pages of close print, and is in fact a full-length book. It became the chief quarry from which Barrow's accusers extracted evidence for their charges against him. Written in the Fleet Prison in 1589 and/or 1590, it was the immediate cause of his arraignment, indictment and execution on a charge of having violated the Statute of 1581. Having examined the foundations of

⁵⁶ L.H. Carlson (ed.), The Writings of Henry Barrow 1587-1590, Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts III (London, George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1962) 67-70

⁵⁷ Ibid., 27

the Church of England, and found them wanting on every criterion which could be applied from the Scriptures to determine the true church, Barrow moved to lambast the Anglican clergy. Although the language in which he expressed himself is at best intemperate, and at worst extreme, to modern ears, it is important to acknowledge that not only was he merely a child of his times in this respect, but also that, more importantly, the grounds of his criticism were both consistent and self-consistent.

Myself I willinglie acknowledg of all other the most unmeet, and everie way unfit unto this worke; but let my zeale of the truth, my love unto you, and the present necessitie of the time, excuse me of presumption or vaine glorie, though no way cover or excuse anie errors or faults escaped me in this present writing; which I wholly, even in feare and reverence, submit, to the trial and censure of all men, at all times, by the word of God. I desire to have no further credit, than the word of God giveth warrant, neither yet would I be reprovved for speaking the truth of God plainlie and simplie, although the same truth have long lyen hid and buried, and be now peradventure generally unpugned of all men. Only, let neither the truth of God be prejudiced, nor the charitable reader offended, by the unlearnedness and simplicitie of the writer.⁵⁸

Such reformation as may be discerned in Elizabeth's religious settlement was half-hearted, incomplete and politically determined. The root cause of each of these faults was the fact that the New Testament pattern for the constitution and government of the church had been ignored in favour of a mere tinkering here and

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H. Barrow, A Briefe Discoverie of the False Church (printed at Dort [Dordrecht, in the Netherlands] 1590/1591) a ii verso

there with the inherently-flawed human construction imposed by Rome and still held in superstitious, if surreptitious, awe by the ecclesiastical hierarchy in England.

This theme of dissatisfaction with the half-measures which were all that the cautious but canny Elizabeth would permit in her religious policy, can be largely identified as the reaction of a distinct socio-economic grouping in late sixteenth-century England.

The meaner sort who had saved Protestantism during the Marian persecution by contributing the bulk of the martyrs, had long been dissatisfied with the Elizabethan settlement. Their longing for a more spiritual and less political reformation was fostered by their reading ... Whereas the upper-middle class man tended to adopt an Erastian form of Presbyterianism, the lower-middle class man often became a Separatist ... Undoubtedly the merchants and moneyed classes who formed the back-bone of Presbyterianism despised the upstart mechanics, who now took upon themselves, male and female alike, to preach, and who often seemed totally devoid of all dignity and restraint - especially in scenes of adult baptism by immersion. Other causes of offence were their arrogating to themselves the name of the godly party or saints, their frequent interruption of services and assumption that ministers of other persuasions were mere time-servers, their mission-like zeal (which was aided by their gifts of popular oratory), their claim to revelations (which are said to have led some to deny the Scriptures to be the Word of God, and to have earned for themselves the epithet 'anti-Scripturists'), and the strange excitement - even ecstasy - that often attended their meetings. The self-sufficient Presbyterian ... never realised that, during the upheaval caused by the civil war, many found formulae insufficient, and that the most exact observance of religious duties gave no comfort ... They felt that they derived no benefit from ceremonial and rebelled at the conception of the

sufficiency of the Scriptures.⁵⁹

A contemporary comment reinforces this twentieth-century judgement - "Needie, broken, decaied men, who know not how to live ... turn Independents".⁶⁰ Others are reported to have said that, now that "they were all taught of God, and needed not that any one should teach them", men in black clothes were no longer necessary."⁶¹

The reference above to "the meaner sort" being "fostered by their reading" is followed by significant evidence as to the level of education among these "upstart mechanics" and "needie, broken, decaied men, who ... turn Independents". "They were happy in that they had at hand the Authorized version of the Bible" - although not until after 1611.

But their devotional literature was by no means confined to the Scriptures ... A remarkable feature of the sixty years or so which closed in 1640 is the enormous output of devotional literature. Books of pious aphorisms, prayers, sermons, and devotions literally poured from the press. Arthur Dent's Plaine Man's Path-way to Heaven went through twenty-five editions between 1601 and 1640. Thomas Egerton's Briefe Method of Catechizing reached its thirty-ninth edition in 1631, and John Norden's Pensive Man's Practice claimed forty impressions by 1627. Reading these manuals made men feel independent of bishops and priests: they naturally differed widely in the conclusions they reached after their reading. While

⁵⁹ G. Davies, The Early Stuarts 1603-1660 (Oxford History of England IX 2nd ed., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1959) 194-195

⁶⁰ T. Edwards, Gangraena (1646) part 2 152

⁶¹ Ibid., part 3, 90

the middle classes were united in opposition to episcopacy, they became divided about all else".⁶²

Evidence for, and the implications of, links between Separatism and socio-economic class, and the related issue of literacy, raised by these comments, are explored in greater depth below (vide chapter 5). Before concluding this present chapter, however, the judgements of recent commentators should be noted. L. Carlson declared that

The Brownists have no claim to special intellectual eminence, but [and this is of the highest relevance to this investigation] they are not uneducated men. Robert Browne, Robert Harrison, Henry Barrow, John Greenwood, John Penry, Nicholas Crane, Thomas Settle and Arthur Bellot were all university men. Later, Francis Johnson, Henry Ainsworth, John Robinson, John Smyth, Richard Clifton, Henry Jacob, John Canne, William Bridge, Jeremiah Burroughes, John Goodwin, Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, John Owen and Sidrach Simpson were all men of university education. Henry Ainsworth was a very able Hebraist and a voluminous writer.⁶³

Pace Carlson, this, his own list, lends very considerable weight to the contention of this thesis that education was highly regarded by the early modern English Separatists. Having benefited from it themselves, it never occurred to them to question its value - though not necessarily the education which was then available to them in the two universities. In one sense, they took it for granted, since

⁶² G. Davies, op. cit., 194-195

⁶³ L.H. Carlson (ed.), The Writings of Henry Barrow 1590-1591, Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts V (London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1966) 213 footnote 2

their opponents were virtually all of them university-educated men, and they needed to be able to contend with these opponents on the same grounds, and with the same intellectual tools. Since education was not the prime concern or interest of the first Separatists, it is reasonable to assume that they were conditioned by the dominant educational thinking of their time. In the educational arena there was not so much a distinction between 'conservative' and 'radical' Separatists, as between 'earlier' and 'later' thinkers and writers. The emergence in the early seventeenth century of a more enlightened understanding of the nature and place of punishment in the upbringing of children, for example, suggests a possible explanation for the different views of Separatists on this particular issue. In other words, their differences may be accounted for in terms of a perfectly natural and understandable gap between thinkers of different generations, rather than a significant disagreement between writers of the same generation.

In a series of three articles published between 1978 and 1985, H. Foreman⁶⁴ argued that those Separatists who left records of their views on education can be classified as either 'For' or 'Against'.

⁶⁴

H. Foreman, (a) "A Sixteenth Century Radical's Views on Education: Henry Barrow" Journal of Educational Administration and History, X, (1978) 1
 (b) "Robert Browne and Education" Baptist Quarterly, XXX, (January 1983) 1
 (c) "In Defence of Education: Some Early Separatist Views" Journal of Educational Administration and History, XVII, (July 1985) 2

He contended that some of them displayed hostility to education, especially to the education of the clergy, and that they questioned not only the content of such education, but its very desirability, in whatever form. Amongst these he numbers Robert Browne and Henry Barrow. On the other side of what I contend is an artificial divide he cites John Penry, John Smyth and John Robinson, who, he asserts, not merely supported, but positively advocated, an educated clergy. In summary, Foreman declared that Penry argued for an educated clergy as an essential requirement for national well-being, that Smyth emphasised the indispensability of education for the clergy if they are to fulfil their duties to any level of adequacy, and that Robinson insisted that education is a divine gift, not necessarily for the clergy only, and is to be valued accordingly. This thesis contends that such a view is too simplistic. Heading an article "In Defence of education" implies entrenched positions taken up and championed to the death against all comers - which was simply not the case with the first Separatists. Their position on education was peripheral to their central concern - completion of the reformation of the church in accordance with their understanding of the teaching of Scripture. They had 'views' on 'education', but not to the extent of making a major issue of them. They dealt with it as and when it impinged on their chief interest - they did not promulgate a logical and self-consistent philosophy of education as part of their doctrine of the church. The fact is that, over a period of more than 40 years, the Separatists neither 'attacked' nor 'defended' education in any modern sense of those

terms. An holistic view of their writings suggests that what they actually did was to represent, at different times, in different ways, and in differing contexts, the varying aspects of the value they believed was inherent in education, for every-one - clergy and laity alike.

CHAPTER 2

THE NATURE OF EDUCATION IN THE PERIOD 1558-1642

The basic question underlying this thesis is what was the attitude of the first English Separatists to education. The theory and practice of education in late Tudor and early Stuart England must therefore be set out, in order to provide reference points which will facilitate the emergence of a meaningful answer to the question.

In this context the following points need to be covered:

- i) How were children and childhood viewed in these decades?
- ii) How extensive was literacy at this time, and what value was placed on it?
- iii) What part did formal schooling play in the educational process?
- iv) Did the universities exercise any decisive influence in the educational arena?
- v) What specific provision was made for the education of the clergy?
- vi) Was there any significant attempt to understand and meet the distinct educational needs of girls and women during this period?

i) How were children and childhood viewed in these decades?

The view taken of children and childhood in early modern England was still largely conditioned, as it had been throughout the Middle Ages, by the accident of socio-economic class. Childhood had scarcely begun for the son of a landless labourer before it was curtailed by the need to work; whereas the son of a prosperous

yeoman might prolong his age of irresponsibility until he was 18 or older. Nevertheless, there is a discernible difference between medieval and early modern assumptions about childhood and adulthood, the differences that marked them off from each other, and the processes of transition from one to the other. Consideration of this issue, however, needs to go back to basics, even to the extent of questioning the validity of the very concept of childhood. Hugh Cunningham has drawn attention to the fact that "In the second half of the twentieth century the history of childhood has been in a state of extraordinary flux."¹ Philip Ariès² for example, argued that in the Middle Ages there was no concept of childhood, and no awareness of its special nature; those whom we would regard as children were seen as mini-adults. They worked from an early age, and were frequently exploited and subjected to harsh treatment and punishments. Insofar as it was acknowledged at all, childhood was an unimportant phase in human life, almost an irrelevancy. Ariès based his assertion on the proposition that children's lives were too fragile to justify the dangers involved in becoming emotionally attached to them; he believed that high infant-mortality rates generated self-defence mechanisms in parents which restricted them to feelings of indifference, feelings which he characterised as not far removed from "the callousness of the Roman or Chinese societies which

¹ H. Cunningham, The Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood since the seventeenth century (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1991)

² P. Ariès, Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin, 1973)

practised the exposure of new-born children"³ - but this statement requires an unacceptably huge leap from passive acquiescence to positive activity in the matter of infant deaths. Ariès endeavours to bridge the very considerable gap between this assumed medieval attitude, and demonstrable early modern attitudes, to childhood, by crediting the growing influence of Christianity with the emergence between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries of a new sensitivity to children. He cites in support of his contention evidence from art, children's dress, plays, and books written about childhood. He claims that the 'coddling' of little children by their mothers was a new development, inseparable from the evolution of the modern conjugal family, which he places in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Whereas medieval children learned by practice, by participation as apprentices in adult life, it was felt that the early modern child was not ready for life, but stood in need of special treatment, of which discipline was a key element, in the home, and especially in the school. Ariès' work proved to be a stimulant, resulting in the appearance of such influential works as Edward Shorter's The Making of the Modern Family⁴ and Lawrence Stone's The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800⁵; both supported Ariès' views on the historical development of the parent-child relationship, though inevitably there was a reaction against them, which was reviewed by R.T. Vann in "The Youth of Centuries

³ P. Ariès, op. cit., 37

⁴ E. Shorter, The Making of the Modern Family (New York, Basic Books, 1975)

⁵ L. Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800 (London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1977)

of Childhood".⁶

Ariès also drew attention to the fact that medieval culture was a young culture; people of all ages shared in the same games and pastimes, but after the age of infancy (not defined) every able person was expected to contribute to the household economy. Ariès and those who followed him contended that the idea of childhood was in effect "invented" in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by such writers as Rousseau and Blake, who replaced the theory of original sin with that of children's innocence. Others have suggested that there have been many concepts of childhood through the ages. For instance, Simon Schama claimed⁷ that children were first approached in a modern love-oriented way in 17th century Holland. He based his theory on the evidence of paintings of Dutch domestic interiors, combined with literary sources; and, of particular interest for my study, he attributed a not insignificant influence in these spheres to what he asserted was a homogeneous Calvinistic culture, (though Jeroen Dekker and Leendert Groenendijk⁸ contend that heterogeneity was in fact the distinctive characteristic of Dutch culture during the period covered by Schama's work). Be that as it may, Schama's view is supported

⁶ R. Vann, "The Youth of Centuries of Childhood", History and Theory 21, (1982) 279-297

⁷ S. Schama, The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1987)

⁸ J. Dekker and L. Groenendijk, "The Republic of God or the Republic of Children? Childhood and Child-rearing after the Reformation; an appraisal of Simon Schama's thesis about the uniqueness of the Dutch case" Oxford Review of Education 17, 3 (1991) 317-335

by the well-attested fact that travellers to the United Provinces were surprised by the privileged position of, and the fondness shown towards, Dutch children. Linda Pollock⁹ has taken the view that parents' attitudes to their children have been governed as much by individual temperament and circumstance, as by any unilinear change.

Mention of Calvinism, however, serves to focus attention on the play of religious influences on changing conceptions of childhood. Christopher Hill¹⁰ and Lawrence Stone¹¹ both concurred with the judgment that Protestantism played a significant, even a decisive, rôle in strengthening the bond between parents and children; and Steven Ozment¹² was a fervent advocate of the view that in Reformation Europe fathers were largely responsible for the humanising of relations within the home. Moving accounts have survived of the attitudes of fathers to their children, and of their reactions to their deaths, e.g., in P.S. Seaver's Wallington's World,¹³ in Michael MacDonald's Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety and

⁹ L. Pollock, Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500-1900 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983)

¹⁰ C. Hill, Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England (New York, Schocken Books, 1964) 443-481

¹¹ L. Stone, op. cit., 135-142

¹² S. Ozment, When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe (Cambridge/London, Harvard University Press, 1983)

¹³ P. Seaver, Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1985) 87

Healing in Seventeenth-Century England¹⁴ in R. Houlbrooke (ed.) English Family Life 1576-1716: An Anthology from Diaries,¹⁵ in P.G. Slater's Children in the New England Mind in Death and in Life,¹⁶ in D.E. Stannard's The Puritan Way of Death: A Study in Religion, Culture and Social Change,¹⁷ and Edmund Morgan's The Puritan Family.¹⁸

Evidence as to specifically Separatist attitudes to children has to be gleaned from random and sometimes sparse references scattered throughout the extant writings. Robert Browne has a brief comment in his A True and Short Declaration: "For so it is Vvritten in Deut. 6.7. vvhere parentes are commaunded to teach the vvord, yea to beat it into their children & to vvhet them on therein, both tariing in the house, & as thei vvalcke bie the vvay, and Vvhen thei ly dovvne, and vvhen thei rise vp."¹⁹ The most extended treatment is

¹⁴ M. MacDonald, Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981)

¹⁵ R. Houlbrooke (ed.), English Family Life 1576-1716: An Anthology from Diaries (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1988) 104, 134 & passim

¹⁶ P. Slater, Children in the New England Mind in Death and in Life (Hamden, Archon Books, 1977) 18-19, 35

¹⁷ D. Stannard, The Puritan Way of Death: A Study in Religion, Culture and Social Change (New York, Oxford University Press, 1977) 51.

¹⁸ E. Morgan, The Puritan Family (New York, Harper and Row, 1966) 77

¹⁹ A. Peel & L. Carlson (edd.), The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne, Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts II (London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1953) 410

given by John Robinson, c. 1575-1625.²⁰ He was the only Separatist pioneer to devote any great space in his writings to the education of children. Given his belief in the corruption of human nature through the fall of Adam, his advocacy of corporal punishment, based on Proverbs chapter 22 verse 15, and chapter 23 verse 24, was at least consistent with his own prior requirements of satisfying both observation and reason. The breaking and suppression of children's wills had to start very early on in case "the tender sprigs grow to that stiffness, that they will break rather than bow." Stubbornness and pride should be checked by keeping children in a "state of meanness", i.e., giving them plain food and clothing, sending them to school, putting them to some trade or work requiring considerable effort and preferably beneath their social status, not taking their side in any matter affecting them, in short, by not "making them men and women before they become good boys and girls".²¹ Robinson did however criticise parents for frequently instilling into their children attitudes which despised people and things. Showing affection for, and pride in, their children could result in parents becoming their slaves; affection could become inordinate - children should know their subordination, and be kept in it.

Robinson acknowledged that putting a child to a trade or profession required a correct assessment of his ability. He was astute enough

²⁰ R. Ashton (ed.), The Works of John Robinson (London, 1851) II, 9 15 III, 102 337ff.

²¹ R. Ashton, op. cit., 248

to comment that parental love would most likely result in exaggeration of the child's ability ("a pernicious error"); yet a dispassionate assessment must be made so that "we built not upon either a vain or uncertain foundation, with great hazard of loss both of labour and expense, in sorting our child to his particular calling and course of life; as all without it, is but a very rash adventure". Robinson commended fathers who took their sons to various craftsmen to try out their tools and implements as a means of testing their aptitude for a particular trade. He developed this line of thought by pleading for children not to be put into any occupation for which they did not possess the disposition, since this could only result in loss all round. Furthermore, parents should not show preference for one or other of their children - apart from an early death "to punish the father's fondness" this would most likely result in their growing up to be the worst members of the family, "proud and arrogant in themselves, presumptuous upon their father's love and contemptuous of the rest of their brethren and sisters".

Robinson's rigorous prescription for bringing up children is not unique to him - Foreman cites Hugh Latimer, but believes that Calvin's was the strongest influence. On the other hand, the Calvinist Thomas Cartwright, a Puritan and one of the founding fathers of English Presbyterianism, while admitting the necessity for punishing children from time to time, urged that it should not be done indiscriminately, and pointed out that it need not necessarily be corporal - a wise admonition might well suffice; what was

necessary was that children should be shown that it was part of their parents' duty to God. Thomas Becon (c.1512-1567) advised that correction should be "gentle and favourable" and according to the nature of the child and the gravity of the offence.

These views suggest disagreement amongst both Puritans and Separatists as to the punishment of children, and are evidence of the emergence in the early seventeenth century of the belief that severe physical punishment of children was becoming less acceptable. Foreman categorises Robinson as a proponent of the older view; he comments,

The writings of Penry, Smyth and Robinson ... serve as illustration of a division of opinion within Separatism over the question of education. It can be of no great surprise that the opponents of the Separatists seized upon the views of the radicals on this question, seeing in them a threat to social order and stability. In so doing they chose to ignore that there were those in Separatism who held conventional views on the matter and who could in no way be seen as a threat to the fabric of English society, but rather sought to uphold and strengthen that which they believed to be good and valuable. It is to such tradition that Penry, Smyth and Robinson belong".²²

In the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the Renaissance concept of a 'vocation' emerged among the English upper and upper-middle classes; they became convinced that their ability to fulfil a God-given rôle in society was in part dependent on a theoretical preparation for life, acquired through the pursuit of a very specific curriculum of study in the classics and religion, which

²²

H. Foreman, "In Defence of Education: Some Early Separatist Views" Journal of Educational administration and History XVII 2 (July 1985) 4

would be accomplished early in life. In the 1590's educational theorists such as William Perkins²³ tried to adjust the possibilities of conflict posed by the concept of vocational choice in adulthood and the need for preparation in adolescence. Although the vocational options open to boys from specific social groups were limited, parents faced with the problem of providing for a number of sons (and daughters) were anxious to guarantee their offspring's futures, as far as they were able to, with an education appropriate for each child. The decision was an economic one in more senses than one; but educational theorists seem to have viewed an extended period of dependence as a necessary prelude to economic independence.

To a certain extent the concept of childhood and adolescence was defined and developed by the institutions in which the young were educated. "Schools and universities took children and youth and planted them ... in groups which were ... age-identified".²⁴ But of course school and/or university was never the automatic destination of every child and youth. "Schooling was by no means universal among the better-off sections of society. Even when a child did attend school or have a tutor at home, it might be for a short period or a chronically-interrupted period."²⁵

²³ W. Perkins, A Treatise of the Vocations or Callings of Men (Works, 1612 edition) I 47-49

²⁴ R. O'Day, Education and Society 1500-1800 (London/New York, Longman, 1982) 3

²⁵ Idem, 3

A significant, but by no means always appreciated, consequence of the Reformation was that educational activities which had previously been centred on the local community expressed in church and guilds had now to be shouldered by the family if the loss of those facilities was to be made good. Parents' responsibility for education now extended beyond their own children to include all the members of their households, though in the great majority of cases this education was construed solely as religious instruction.

If it were possible to discern the extent to which boys and girls were allowed some say in their choice of vocation, it would be easier to bring early modern concepts of childhood and youth into sharper focus; but the available evidence is very limited. It is either of a prescriptive nature, e.g., occurring in the writings of leading preachers, or it is descriptive, and too often in ambiguous terms, of the practice in Puritan and other religious environments. Generalisation from such sources as sermons, tracts, diaries and autobiographies entails the risk of extending to the whole community the practice of a very restricted, and perhaps wholly untypical, section of it. Furthermore, there was such a variety of practice that it is virtually impossible to discern a single dominant attitude to children in this period. It is probably wise therefore to limit any judgement to the comment that "from the perspective of the history of education the increasing institutionalisation of childhood and youth was of considerably more significance than changes in the fashions of child-rearing."²⁶

ii) **How extensive was literacy at this time, and what value was placed on it?**

It used to be believed that in the later Middle Ages literacy was almost exclusively confined to the clergy, but that as a result of humanist and Protestant encouragement, there was a sudden surge in mass lay literacy in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. More recent research, however, has modified this view; it is now thought that the clergy were not the only literates before the Reformation, and that literacy among early modern laymen was not as widespread as previously believed. No doubt formal schooling contributed to a rise in levels of literacy; but so also did the determination of parents and sponsors that children should be introduced to reading and writing skills.

Furthermore, much hinges on the definition of literacy. This has engaged the attention of a number of leading scholars in recent years. Is it the ability to sign one's name, for example, or to read an easy book? However it is defined, it seems that literacy must be regarded as a relative concept, determined by the expectations of one's peers, class or occupation. It is however clear that written material was far from readily available and accessible. This was partly due to the technical problems of producing it, but also to the lack of a perceived need for it; but when technological advance improved its availability, demand for it rose accordingly. Technology and economics, then, appear to have played a part in the expansion of literacy in early modern England. The post-Reformation increase in the recruitment of clergymen may go much

of the way towards accounting for a rise in levels of literacy; but literacy for the clerk still largely meant latinity, which was not the case for the increasing numbers of lay people acquiring literacy skills in early modern England. For such groups as the aristocracy, for example, the impulse to literacy was driven by the need to be able to supervise the management of their personal affairs; "It seems that literacy followed social status and occupational need" (Christopher Haigh)²⁷ but, then, having acquired the skill, they utilised it to read for pleasure and information, and for the private exercise of religious devotion.²⁸

The part played by politics in raising levels of literacy in sixteenth-century England may be traced to the emergence of English as the language of the upper classes and of written record, combined with rapid improvements in printing technology, which increased the availability of cheap texts. Vernacular literacy thus became a practical proposition for people with no clerical aspirations, or particularly scholarly aptitudes; the relevance of this development to an assessment of the educational achievements of the Separatists can scarcely be over-estimated. So, despite fears of the outcome of introducing the lower classes to print, and even attempts to restrict this development, literacy steadily became the key to cultural life in early modern England.

²⁷ C. Haigh, English Reformations; Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993) 195

²⁸ N. Orme, English Schools in the Middle Ages (London, Methuen, 1973) 27-29, 32

The gathering economic strength of England which is such a marked feature of the Tudor century resulted, amongst other things, in the generation of a drive towards literacy among merchants, craftsmen and artisans. Haigh is of the opinion that "Artisans were more likely to be literate than were labourers, and their work gave them the wider contacts and greater independence which could lead them to encounter and accept new ideas ... But almost all the evidence points roughly in the same direction: the Protestants were gentry, professionals, yeomen farmers, and, above all, artisans."²⁹ Significantly, the majority of the Separatists were located in these occupational groups. Reading and writing were not often required for the practice of an occupation; but the possession of these skills, or the lack of them, was used as a means of restricting recruitment if economic circumstances required that, or raising the status of guild membership. Men who worked in areas such as administration, or the law, had an obvious need for literacy; but for the free, as much as for the unfree, of rural England, there was little need to be literate to fulfil one's social role.

Literacy, then, meant different things to different people; and it is important to distinguish between practical (or functional) literacy and 'mere' literacy. However, it has not yet proved possible to establish significant correlation between socio-economic need and the acquisition of active literacy. Furthermore, literacy cannot be equated with education. Reading at this time was an oral and

shared activity; learning was very much a matter of listening and memorising, and if books were involved in the process at all, they were for reading aloud. Both reading and writing were regarded as specialist skills specific to certain occupations, not, as nowadays, as virtually universal competences. Low levels of literacy do not therefore justify assumptions of low levels of education; the only valid conclusion is that reading and writing were not regarded as essential skills for the transmission of culture or opinion or for carrying on the ordinary business of daily life.³⁰

Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that the type and distribution of educational facilities reflects the state of popular literacy, and its importance to a culture. The view that the take-off in lay literacy had begun prior to the Reformation, rather than appearing suddenly and dramatically in late sixteenth century England, is supported by the following comments:

- a) Lollardy, with its tradition of vernacular Bible reading, ("The determined few who attended Lollard Bible classes ... sometimes learned to read so that they could study the New Testament"³¹) must have had some impact - but this would have been the case only in some parts of the country. "Probably Protestantism built upon a pre-existent interest in Bible-reading."³²

³⁰ M. Aston, "Lollardy and Literacy" History, 62, (1977)

³¹ C. Haigh, op. cit., 54

³² I. Luxton, "The Reformation and Popular Culture" in F. Heal and R. O'Day (eds.) Church and Society in England, Henry VIII to James I (London, Macmillan, 1977) 67-68

- b) Book ownership - but this of course does not necessarily entail literacy. Religious books were common bequests; but little more can be deduced from the evidence beyond the conclusion that book ownership reveals the conservative religious interests of the laity.
- c) Parents taught their children to read so that the latter could claim benefit of clergy if they were convicted of certain crimes - but this does not sound very convincing. Learning the first verse of Psalm 51 by heart would be much cheaper than formal schooling to a relatively high level merely to guard against a contingent possibility.
- d) The attraction of a career in the church - literacy was valued by the lower classes not so much for itself, but as an aid to upward social mobility. It was a prerequisite not only for the clergy, but also for teaching, administration, the law, writing, and the keeping of accounts.

Cressy's study of early modern literacy led him to conclude that while the signature is a less than perfect key to active literacy (i.e. the ability to read and write), it constitutes the only evidence which permits comparison between differing groups within society and over time, and also possesses a fair degree of accuracy. He found that literacy was firmly tied to social and economic function: that this varied between different social, occupational and gender groups: that even within one broad social spectrum in a large urban area (London), there were great differences in the spread of literacy:

and that these differences were related to economic need.³³ Stone's estimate³⁴ of an average male literacy rate of 30% nationwide in 1642 masked wide differences between town and countryside, and south and north. Cressy suggested that the real differences in literacy rates lay between one parish and another in a given area, with the highest rates in market towns, or close to them.³⁵ The picture is further complicated by Cressy's assertion that a strong argument emerges for the actual contraction of educational opportunity for the masses in the seventeenth century, after a period of expansion during the reign of Elizabeth - a promising increase in active literacy among the middling people was not fulfilled in the early Stuart period. It seems that fewer people were receiving basic education in reading and writing at the very time when there was an explosion in numbers in higher education.³⁶

There appear in fact to have been several distinct phases in the overall history of literacy in early modern England. Between 1530 and 1550 there was marked progress; the years 1550 to 1560 saw a setback; the first 20 years of Elizabeth's reign witnessed rapid overall improvement; the years 1580 to 1610 were years of decline; between 1610 and 1640 there was again improvement.

³³ D. Cressy, "Levels of Illiteracy in England, 1530-1730" Historical Journal, 20, 1 (1977) 1-23

³⁴ L. Stone, "Literacy and Education in England, 1640-1900" Past and Present, 42, (1969) 99-101

³⁵ D. Cressy, Literacy and the Social Order (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980)

³⁶ D. Cressy, "Educational Opportunity in Tudor and Stuart England" History of Education Quarterly, 16, (1976)

Haigh believes that "Illiteracy among those who had been of school age in 1580 was much lower than among those of school age in 1560, judging from the ability to sign their names later ... Overall literacy rates seem to have stagnated after about 1580, and reading among women and labourers remained rare."³⁷ These changes reflect social attitudes towards the wisdom of educating the lower and middling classes.

Recent work ... points to the conclusion that literacy was less widespread outside London even in the seventeenth century than has often been assumed; that where it existed it was socially circumscribed; and that the 'take-off' into lay literacy was not as dramatic as had been posited. This progress was ... often interrupted and socially differentiated. The upper and professional classes were always much more highly literate than the middle and lower classes. Any suggestions that the 'education revolution' penetrated the labouring class should be viewed with suspicion. To the extent that there was a dramatic rise in literacy rates, this was confined to the gentle and professional elites.³⁸

Haigh makes the same point from the religious angle:

Since a bibliocentric religion was much more accessible to the literate, it would be surprising if Protestantism's social distribution did not reflect reading. Protestants were recruited from throughout the social scale but disproportionately from the middling and prosperous sectors, those more likely to be literate and more able to afford books.³⁹

It also appears that, contrary to the beliefs and hopes of some in lower social groupings, social mobility was not necessarily related

³⁷ C. Haigh, op. cit., 276

³⁸ R. O'Day, op. cit., (1982) 20-21

³⁹ C. Haigh, op. cit., 195

to the acquisition of literacy. Though obviously required for some occupations, reading and writing were not indispensable for a comfortable, even a prosperous, life in the seventeenth century - professional literates could always be hired for tasks requiring literacy, and there is no significantly close correlation between the possession of literacy skills and economic prosperity. It is probably the case that yeomen sought literacy in order to enter the church, not in order to make money, since literacy was not particularly respected in commercial or trade circles; only the church offered upward social mobility (and that only to a limited extent) to the husbandman's or yeoman's able son as a result of the acquisition of literacy. For most, opportunities to acquire literacy opened up at the age of five or six, and closed again at about 15. It is true that careers in other professions, e.g., the law, were just becoming possible for well-educated, non-university youths; "nevertheless, although social mobility was not impossible in the early modern context, it was certainly not facilitated".⁴⁰

One other point is worth making before leaving the question of literacy. It is possible that a very considerable number of people who slipped through the net of research into wills and signatures because they were unable to write, may well have been able to read. Christopher Haigh suggests that "perhaps those who could read but not sign were balanced by those who could sign but not read."⁴¹ Concerted efforts were certainly made during the

⁴⁰ R. O'Day, op. cit., (1982) 22

⁴¹ C. Haigh, op. cit., 194

Reformation by church and state, which both had vested interest in people being able to receive knowledge and ideas, to press print into the service of the Protestant political cause; and the production of printed political propaganda presupposed the ability to read, at least among the social and professional elites. But Protestant enthusiasm for widespread Bible-reading was soon tempered by the evidence that it encouraged independent thinking and interpretation, which resulted in renewed attacks, and from a stronger ideological base, on the prerogatives of such people as clergymen, doctors and lawyers. Church and state consequently tended to close ranks in order to censor the press and control its growth, with the aim of extinguishing dissent, political as well as religious, in the interest of a compliant conformity.

More radical reformers, however, still advocated literacy because it entailed the possibility of virtue. "How can they know God's will that cannot read it?" summarises common ground in writers from Perkins to Baxter. Such people tended to the view that Scripture did not need interpretation - the truth must be self-evident to all men. "Attempts to render reading a purely passive skill ... failed miserably. Dissent mounted throughout the period and made itself felt in a barrage of printed works".⁴² All the same, it does not seem that the English ruling class ever envisaged manipulating education in order to bring about social change, though they were aware that it might be used to correct some social injustices. Education was on the whole seen as a strictly utilitarian tool for

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R. O'Day, op. cit., (1982) 23

preparing men to do the work for which their birth and vocation (usually inseparable) had destined them, and as necessary for introducing people to the values of church and state. The hierarchy, ecclesiastical and political, nevertheless soon came to fear the consequences of teaching people to read more than the results of teaching them to write. It is gravely misleading to regard reading as a passive skill; it encouraged habits of mind which were disturbingly active. Evidence as to the teaching of reading and writing in early modern England, and the clear preoccupation of contemporaries with the art of reading, must lead to the conclusion that reading without writing was more common then than it is now. Writing was, both socially and occupationally, a much more specific skill than reading; children had to remain in school longer in order to learn to write, and also had to pay extra for such tuition. By contrast, reading was the first skill taught, and it had a general application. "While it may be possible to measure the extent of active literacy in the modern sense of the ability to read and write, we are far from being able to measure the spread of the ability to read among the early modern English population."⁴³

Haigh marshalls evidence which bears more directly on the subject of this thesis:

Illiteracy was no bar to Protestantism; [William Maldon] was attracted by hearing the Bible read, then taught himself to read, and formed his faith by ... the New Testament. The devotion to the gospel of Thomas Hodgesham of Aylsham in Norfolk preceded his literacy; he had learned to read in 1551 from local

Protestants, and in 1558 he read the Bible aloud until his neighbours called the constable to have him arrested. Derick Carver ... of Sussex held meetings in his house in 1554 at which the Prayer Book ... was read, but Carver himself only learned to read when in prison ... Efforts by mature men to learn reading indicate that illiteracy was a handicap for Protestants, leaving them as dependent on readers as Catholics were on priests ... There were illiterate Protestants, and there were some whose Protestantism prompted literacy; but they were few. Protestants were readers ... that was how their enemies identified them: 'heretics and two-penny book men'. So it is likely that the spread of Protestant allegiance followed the spread of literacy."⁴⁴

This is the background against which literacy among the Separatists must be assessed. Surviving evidence relating to the period of interest to this study is examined in detail in chapter 5 below; but in essence it is my contention that the extent of literacy, construed in the narrower sense of the ability to read, within this particular sub-set has been under-estimated, for the following reasons.

Firstly, the concentration of Separatists in London entails the likelihood that more of them would have been literate, and some of them literate to a higher level, than their fellows in other parts of the country. Obviously this is a wholly relative judgement, and I have been at pains to acknowledge the incidence of Separatism in other parts of England in late Tudor and early Stuart times, as the map on page 32⁹ and the concluding comments to chapter 5, make clear. Nevertheless, the demands and pressures of life in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century London are inherently likely to have resulted in increased numbers of people living and

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C. Haigh, op. cit., 194

working there acquiring at least the ability to read, and in some cases competence in writing as well. It is not possible to quantify such a statement; but the probability of its being true rests on the indisputable fact that London had by this time certainly become the centre, though not the exclusive domain, of national life, politically, administratively, economically, culturally and religiously.

Secondly, when all due allowance has been made for the facts, noted above, that literacy was a relative concept, that it meant different things to different people, that it was not necessarily regarded as a good to be desired, that its availability seems to have been very patchy, and that access to it was consequently widely variable, we are still left with a group of people who do not appear on the evidence available to us to fit comfortably into all, or even any, of the categories delineated by these limitations.

Thirdly, the analysis I set out in chapter 5 below of the records of the examination of more than 50 Separatists in London gaols between 1587 and 1593, reveals either direct references to reading and writing abilities, or indications that they were assumed to be widely possessed by these people. For example, "I utterlye deny not but some man maye read a prayer and prayers; but yet I had rather he should read them as he doth other good bookes ... reading of good is rather a teacher as al other good books are".⁴⁵

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J. Greenwood, "Fragment of a Letter" (Giles Wiggenton MS, Congregational Library, London) printed in L. Carlson (ed.), The Writings of John Greenwood 1587-1590, together with the Joint Writings of Henry Barrow and John Greenwood 1587-1590 Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts IV (London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1962) 9

Was it prior possession of these competences which made Separatism, with its insistent stress on the supremacy in all matters of belief and behaviour of the written Scriptures, accessible to these 'ordinary' people? Or did the fire and fervour of the first advocates of separation from the half-reformed established church stimulate a localised spurt in the acquisition of the ability to read, circumscribed by the specialised interests and motivations of a limited group? It may not be possible to return a firm answer to such questions; but it is valid to suggest, on the strength of the evidence set out in this thesis, that competence in reading was more extensive among the early modern English Separatists than has previously been realised.

iii) What part did formal schooling play in the educational process?

Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England and Wales was not a schooled society. The nurture and education of children was still firmly rooted in the family, the church and the workshop. Since only the clergy needed advanced literacy for their work, institutionalised academic education was available only for members of the clerical estate; though this term then embraced people who would today be classified as civil servants and lawyers. Haigh comments that "Changes in the provision of schooling, ... some have called an 'educational revolution'. There had been heavy investment in new schools in the 1550's, though political and religious disruption delayed their impact for a decade."⁴⁶ However,

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C. Haigh, op. cit., 276

the humanist philosophy generated by the Renaissance found one avenue of expression in an emerging movement for the schooling of society. "[In 1547] ... The Chantries Act ... [had been] eased through by its promise that the king would endow schools ... About a twelfth of [the chantry priests] had also served as schoolmasters, though most of the schools were saved."⁴⁷ John Colet was one of those who were convinced that virtue could be restored to civic and religious life through the medium of a progressive Christian classical curriculum. The literature of the period continually insists that the school has within it the power to counteract the evil influences upon the child of family and society.⁴⁸

There was of course no educational 'system' in any way comparable with what is taken for granted today. It is quite erroneous to equate the ABC and Petty schools of Tudor and Stuart times with modern primary schools, or the grammar schools of those days with present-day secondary schools. Grammar schools in existence before the arrival of the Renaissance-humanist impulse to establish new foundations seem to have been virtually immune to the new ideas championed by the latter. Doran and Durston write that

The loss of monastic schools was not a major setback to educational provision, since other schools had existed alongside them in the pre-Reformation period,

⁴⁷ Ibid., 171

⁴⁸ J. Simon, Education and Society in Tudor England (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1966) 59-101
K. Charlton, Education in Renaissance England (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965) 89-130; also 83, 86, 396, 405-406

and royal grammar schools took over the functions of monastic cathedral schools at Canterbury, Carlisle, Ely, Norwich and Worcester.⁴⁹

They continued to concentrate on the training of potential clergymen on the one hand, or tradesmen on the other. This dual purpose is reflected in the fairly widespread phenomenon of the combination in a town school of a classical side and a vernacular side - certainly town schools seem often to have met a demand for basic vernacular literacy. Beyond these formal and sometimes venerable establishments, private schools - often of a temporary existence - and freelance teachers eked out a living by providing the type of education demanded by a market which could, and did, fluctuate in its requirements from place to place and even from year to year.

The ephemeral nature of many of the schools run by freelance teachers makes them, of course, the most difficult to trace. Diocesan archives sometimes yield information enabling research to be undertaken into the development of such schools; but the evidence is rarely either systematic or comprehensive. This makes it almost impossible to be confident that there is enough full and accurate information to facilitate valid conclusions as to the number, type and distribution of schools in a given area. One constant, however, is the fact that links between schools and the church seem to have been as marked after the Reformation as they

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S. Doran and C. Durston, Princes, Pastors and People: The Church and Religion in England 1529-1689 (London, Routledge, 1991) 167

were before it. Schoolmasters in endowed grammar schools, for instance, were regarded as being to all intents and purposes ecclesiastical officers, responsible in some sense to the church authorities. Freelance school-teachers were in theory obliged to obtain (for a fee) a licence to teach from the bishop of the diocese, just as were their counterparts in established schools. This concern of the ecclesiastical authorities to maintain control over teachers appears to have sprung from a fear that unlicensed schoolmasters and mistresses might spread papist or puritan views, and thus prove dangerous - politically, as well as religiously. It is particularly interesting for the purposes of this study that dread of nonconformity - which of course in this context embraced Roman Catholicism as well as Dissent - rather than interest in education per se seems to have been at the root of the ecclesiastical concern to regulate teaching personnel. However, the system of licensing teachers was deficient in several respects. The regulations were difficult to enforce, and it was easy to evade the eye of the authorities, and teach without a licence. Returns of unlicensed school-teachers were both spasmodic and unreliable, because the decision to present a school-teacher to the authorities rested with the parishioners, who might well not wish to lose their school-teacher. However, it seems that in practice the authorities were primarily concerned with controlling the grammar schools; they displayed only occasional interest in freelance teachers and private

schools.⁵⁰

Geographical factors also influenced the place and significance of institutionalised schooling in early modern England. Trade routes certainly influenced the provision of formal education; market towns appear to have had a hinterland in the field of education just as they did in matters of trade. Haigh's comments focus these assertions on the area of concern to this study.

The geographical distribution of ... Protestantism reflects a number of interacting influences ... It seems that the Protestant preaching effort had been concentrated in the south-east, close to London and the universities, more prosperous and densely populated areas. Perhaps preachers chose to work in areas where they could hope for sympathy from old Lollards, or perhaps they worked widely but succeeded better in Lollard districts. When Protestantism was spread by the laity, it seems to have been along trade routes to ports, market towns, and manufacturing centres. Perhaps, too, Protestantism was built best where there were concentrations of those most likely to respond: the literate artisans who worked in cities and towns of all sizes, and the clothworkers who were most common in smaller towns and upland hamlets ... By 1553 Protestantism was strongest in some of the largest towns, especially London, Norwich, Ipswich, Bristol and Coventry, and in smaller towns which were ports or cloth towns. The market and cloth towns of Suffolk (especially Hadleigh and Mendlesham), of Essex (notably Colchester and Coggeshall) and of Kent (especially Maidstone and Sandwich) had established Protestant groups, which vigorous repression failed to crush. There were some Protestants almost everywhere in England, but most in a sweep from Norfolk round to Sussex, and in a spur from London up the Thames valley. There were certainly Protestant circles in Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Huntingdonshire, Northamptonshire, north Warwickshire, south-east Lancashire, and west Yorkshire (especially in Halifax

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R. O'Day, "Church Records and the History of Education in Early Modern England, 1642: a Problem in Methodology" History of Education, Vol. 2, No. 2, (June 1973) 115-132

and Leeds), but they were probably smaller and certainly less numerous than in the south-east. The new religion had infiltrated generally, and established a substantial presence in some places, but it had not swept the country.⁵¹

Probably only a small proportion of the rural population was geographically distant from any kind of institutional education; where the population warranted it, there seems usually to have been provision for the young to acquire basic literacy skills. The trouble was that geographical proximity to a school for most of the rural population was not matched by economic accessibility. It was economically out of the question for many parents to send their children to school after the age of six, especially in rural areas; there was no immediate or obvious benefit that education might offer to compensate for the loss of the economic advantage of child labour. All the evidence relating to grammar schools indicates that, apart from the sons of the gentry, pupils from rural areas were not accommodated in large numbers. Yeomen who wanted a classical education for their sons, usually with a view to a career in the church, had in effect to provide it themselves, either by supporting - financially - a freelance school-teacher or private school, or by banding together to subscribe to a village school.

The mere presence of a grammar school in a market town did not, however, necessarily mean that all the educational requirements of a community were being met. Furthermore, there were still people living in remote country areas out of reach of any kind of school;

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C. Haigh, op. cit., 197

this was especially, though not exclusively, true of Wales. O'Day makes an interesting observation on this fact:

In a way difficult to comprehend today, individuals and isolated communities were influencing the forms of education as much as educational theory was ... Freelance teachers and schools were sensitive to educational demand ... Even endowed schools ... made concessions to parental wishes and community requirements. And so the historian, who loves to categorise, is faced with a multiplicity of types of school, each the product of differing traditions as well as of the interplay between these traditions and specific circumstances. Yet this is an accurate portrayal of the provision of education at the elementary/grammar level in early modern England and Wales.⁵²

Consideration of the part played by formal schooling in the educational process also involves a survey of curriculum and methods utilised in the schools; a study of what and how children were taught should reveal something of the intention behind education in schools at this time. The most obvious, and probably the most powerful, of the motives driving contemporary education was the part it could play in the battle against Catholicism; education was now, amongst other things, a tool of conversion.

As far as the curriculum was concerned, it was widely accepted that children should learn to read, and it rapidly became common for primers to contain a printed alphabet. From an early age, however, and persisting throughout the whole of a student's formal education, debate or disputation was an important part of the learning process. This was because the ability to read was

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R. O'Day, Education and Society 1500-1800 (London, Longman, 1982) 40

relatively limited, and reading material was relatively expensive, though both these conditions were in process of changing; but it had the effect of placing a premium on the memorising of received wisdom, and the disapproving of free thought. Even people who could not read were introduced to the world of the mind by listening to those who read aloud; and when one had learned to read for oneself, one continued to read aloud, and thus to share one's reading with others. This involved listening on the part of all the participants, and discussion by possibly the majority of them, even if only one of them was capable of reading. It was a communal activity; reading, teaching and memorising were part of a long-standing tradition, more closely interconnected than they are today. The intention of the 'establishment', of course, was that reflection upon authorised reading should result in acceptance of its contents. Some in authority saw the reformation of religion as a continuing process, while others regarded it as accomplished, and sought to curtail further change; but neither considered it to be the concern of the 'ordinary reader'. The Protestant emphasis on educating the laity in religion, therefore, was directed towards the acquisition of knowledge and approved doctrine, not the cultivation of critical or creative faculties. The recognised responsibility of the curate (or the reader) to catechise the young and ensure that they could repeat the responses correctly, was shared by fathers and masters of households, who engaged in family prayer and catechising.

Undoubtedly some children would have learned to read in the course of their religious instruction; but of course there were other ways to literacy (though ironically, the ability to read appears to have been a by-product in many Dame schools, rather than their main aim). The fact that by and large children were not an economic asset before about the age of seven has been taken up by Margaret Spufford; she suggests that as a consequence many poor children may have learnt to read, either at home or in school, before that age, but that as writing was most often taught during the eighth year, it was probably out of reach of most of them because their labour was needed at home.⁵³ Her case rests on a rather small sample of highly unusual people - autobiographers - but it does perhaps suggest that passive literacy may have been more common than David Cressy is willing to allow.

The approach to the teaching of reading appears to have been a combination of look-and-say, familiarity with the material, and phonetics, and was too often not well thought-out. In the early years of the period under review it does not seem to have occurred to the authorities that reading the Scriptures for themselves might embolden pupils to challenge the interpretations offered by churchmen; but for many, the effect was, eventually, just that. Children rapidly took to applying their new skill to other books; some of them thought about what they read, and began to

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M. Spufford, "First Steps in Literacy: the reading and writing experiences of the humblest seventeenth-century spiritual autobiographers" Journal of Social History, (1979) 411-415

challenge accepted opinions.

Around the middle of the sixteenth century printed manuals of instruction for teachers began to emerge. Some of them, including Roger Ascham's The Scholemaster, were intended for use by adult pupils, as well as the schoolmaster; all of them seem to have encouraged teachers to consider the purpose, material and method of their teaching in the light of current educational thought. Edmund Coote's poem, "The Schoolmaster to His Scholars"⁵⁴ conveyed the message that through attendance at school a child will learn to become a good Christian and a good citizen, as well as absorbing the mores of the society in which he lives.

An important feature of sixteenth-century English educational thought is the emergence and development of the concept of the school as an agent of socialisation and acculturation, alongside its academic function. There was an element of novelty about this in a society in which schooling outside the home was still not accepted as the norm; the process whereby both the academic and the social upbringing of children was increasingly moved out of the home and into the schoolhouse was one of the most distinctive achievements of early modern educational thought. What is most intriguing is not that schools performed this socialising function, for medieval schools had done that, but that a coherent theory was developed which rationalised this dual purpose. John Brinsley's

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E. Coote, The English Schoolmaster (1596)

Ludus Literarius⁵⁵ is particularly significant for the insight it affords into the thinking of a progressive sixteenth-century teacher. He held that learning is best regarded as a highly competitive game. Competition was seen as one of the means by which children could be encouraged to persevere in attendance and learning through the long hours at school, and through which their aggressiveness could be relatively harmlessly channelled. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century society was certainly competitive; boys who attended school and university with a view to social advancement had every reason to be competitively inclined - by displaying their talents they could attract coveted patronage.

Techniques for the teaching of reading developed in tandem with improvements in printing technology. The increasing availability of books enabled a greater use to be made of visual aids; Comenius' Orbis Pictus (1657) asserted that the child learns better through visual and tactile experiences, and nearly a century earlier John Hart's Method (1570) had advocated a combined pictorial and phonetic approach. It also seems that at times the hornbook was set to music.⁵⁶ Seventeenth-century children were apparently given educational games, although it is not known whether they were actually used in schools. In some families, at least, the girls were encouraged to read as much as the boys.⁵⁷ Wherever and

⁵⁵ J. Brinsley, Ludus Literarius or the Grammar School (1612) 48-50

⁵⁶ T. Morley, A Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music (1608)

⁵⁷ A. Macfarlane (ed.), The Diary of Ralph Josselin (British Academy, 1976) 423

whenever the child learned to read, however, the same books were used - an ABC, a primer and the Bible. Moreover, there was no fixed age for beginning school; in almost every instance the petty class must have contained scholars between the ages of four and eight, at varying levels of proficiency.

It seems to have been common for children to be sent to a number of different schools in what was, by today's standards, a short enough school life. Certainly many schools were kept solely for the purpose of making money, not from any sense of vocation, while others were transitory by their very nature, being kept by peripatetic pedagogues, not licensed to teach. The competitive philosophy underlying much practice in the schools could easily be corrupted in a society in which the school-teacher was of a lower social status than many of his pupils, and often dependent on their parents for his living and his furtherance; the system was certainly open to abuse, though it is not known how many teachers were open to bribery, or how many discriminated, and in what ways, between fee-paying and free scholars.

It is likely that there were more teachers than ever before active in the first half of Elizabeth's reign and that they had more pupils. It would otherwise be hard to explain the significant increase in literacy which now took place.⁵⁸

There was no specific professional training for teachers; it was assumed that those who had learned were automatically qualified to pass on their learning. There is little evidence that teachers

thought about humanist theory or method, or of the need for the child actually to enjoy learning. The ratio of pupils to teachers was often very high, although this would vary greatly from school to school - the noise level must have been stressfully high! Evidence from contemporary illustrations, such as the woodcut of an Elizabethan school-room in 1592, in the Radio Times Hulton Picture Library, suggests that group teaching using a board or visual aid may have been common practice. It seems that a variety of individual aids was also available to help pupils to learn.

Writing was not usually regarded as a skill to be taught in the elementary school - it was more commonly taught by a peripatetic scrivener for a fee. Nevertheless, some schoolmasters appear to have felt strongly that the teaching of writing did in fact belong in the school. Part of the problem with it lay in the fact that writing required constant practice, and boys who had been taught briefly by a scrivener soon forgot how to write well. The key to good writing habits lay in proper equipment, as well as constant practice; but the Elizabethan and Jacobean school-room was ill-designed for that - it had no desks.

As with writing, so with arithmetic - it was regarded as a subject to be learned after reading had been mastered. Robert Recorde⁵⁹ produced a defence of the teaching of arithmetic based on the antiquity of the subject, and its obvious utility. By means of visual aids he showed that numeracy was accessible to the illiterate as

well as the literate. It was not uncommon for the subject to be taught by a specialist; and by the end of the sixteenth century a small but growing number of school statutes specifically stated that the master must be qualified to teach arithmetic. Parental concern with practical aspects of their sons' education resulted in concentration on the practical applications of mathematics for the gentle and trading classes - surveying was taught, as well as the casting of accounts.⁶⁰ Teachers were increasingly expected to provide a grounding in the subject; but as arithmetic was commonly left until reading and the accidence had been learned, boys who had concentrated on classical subjects sometimes suffered with regard to mathematical facility. Distinguishing between the curricula followed for different vocations once reading and accidence had been mastered may have been fairly widespread - schools seem increasingly to have fulfilled a number of differing functions.

At the same time, there was an abundance of differing types of school. Haigh mentions that "fifteen local schools were founded by eleven bishops between 1490 and 1525; some of them were deliberately designed for the teaching of candidates for ordination."⁶¹ There was no accepted school-age - even young adults attended school where need dictated; and social class had a profound impact upon schooling. It was accepted that children had

⁶⁰ R. Parkinson, Life of Adam Martindale (Manchester, Chetham Society, 1845) 175-178

⁶¹ C. Haigh, op. cit., 86

different educational requirements. Vocation, of course, was determined by merit, aptitude and ambition, but above all, by social class; and schools accordingly reacted to demand by catering for the varying needs of the market. Schools founded by subscription are the most conspicuous examples of this response to the perceived demands of society; but endowed grammar schools and private schools of every description also demonstrated sensitivity to the wishes of the clientele. Evidence for this emerges in the growing tendency for grammar schools to desert their classical origins. Not only did English and Latin schools exist side by side in early modern England, but country grammar schools in particular were moving towards accepting responsibility for the tuition of *petties*.

What ... occurred was a subtle shift from humanist and Protestant humanist views of the need for a general education for all vocations ... to mid and late seventeenth century arguments that education should be more specifically vocational or practical ... But ... the experiment of 'comprehensive' education in the town or country grammar school ended in the post-Restoration years.⁶²

Schools generally departed from the Renaissance pattern because they were created and run to meet the needs of a community which was not often much in touch with the ideas of Renaissance educators, and became even less so as Renaissance influences receded further and further back in time. The fact that there was in no sense a grammar school system imposed from above also facilitated change; in late Tudor and early Stuart times education

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R. O'Day, *op. cit.*, (1982) 63

was increasingly seen as a way of confirming, rather than modifying, the ramifications of the hierarchical social structure. Education was of value for all classes of society above the very poorest, but it would by no means always be classical; rather, it would be designed to serve the needs of the vocation for which each particular youth was destined. This view did not contradict the social humanist perception of education as the means by which the individual would be brought to virtue; but it made it clear that class and patronage determined the path to virtue which each individual would take. Education might help to improve society, but it would not help to revolutionise it.⁶³

Nevertheless, despite the pressure exerted on schools to provide an education of practical use to the non-gentle, non-professional classes, the preparation of boys for university through a rigorous classical curriculum was still the main demand made of most schoolmasters. For some, the importance of Latin must have been eclipsed in practice, if not in theory, by the sheer profitability of subjects more geared to their clients' perceived needs; but Latin continued to dominate the curriculum because the universities required it. Nevertheless, its apparent acceptance as the be-all and end-all of grammar school education was at odds with reality in many cases - even John Brinsley emphasized the necessity of vernacular studies, since only through the medium of English will the child be socialised, and come to an understanding of the

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D. Cressy, "Educational Opportunity in Tudor and Stuart England" (History of Education Quarterly 16, (1976) passim, especially 302, 316

Scriptures and religious instruction.

The Protestantisation of education in England must have affected the place of classical studies in the curriculum in a subtle but real manner. Haigh declares that

Protestant clergy emphasised the role of learning in Christian understanding ... two decades of educational advance gave Protestant ministers a brief opportunity: for a time, they confronted a more educated clientele ... Ministers thought regular reading was necessary in the formation of Protestant faith and conscience. So perhaps educational change created conditions for Protestant advance. A religion which stressed Bible-reading had more appeal as literacy grew; those with scriptural knowledge might respond more effectively to the preachers; and the literate had another route to faith; by Protestant books.⁶⁴

Renaissance textbooks were sometimes replaced in the schools by the works of English or continental Reformers; but many late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century schools continued to teach classical languages as a way of entering the ministry. A religious emphasis co-existed with the Renaissance emphasis on the classics, because in England the Renaissance had always stressed the relevance of classical writings to Christianity. In this context, of course, 'classical' was to all intents and purposes synonymous with 'Latin'; although Renaissance educationalists recommended that boys learn Greek and Hebrew as well as Latin, it is unlikely that many schools taught these subjects before the late sixteenth century - they were crowded out of the curriculum by the excessive demands of the Latin course, and it must always have been difficult

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C. Haigh, *op. cit.*, 276

to recruit schoolmasters capable of teaching Greek and/or Hebrew.

There is doubt over the extent to which books were used in the early modern English school-room. Reference books seem to have been in short supply, and the task of preparing work-sheets and reference aids may have lain squarely on the shoulders of teachers and/or pupils. All the same, sophisticated techniques of alphabetising, indexing, categorising and classifying knowledge were introduced, and many pupils carried these study habits into adult life. The sound educational principle was utilised, that students would be much more likely to remember what they had had to search for for themselves. However, school books were certainly both produced and used, and many urban grammar schools possessed libraries, and made provision for the purchase of books; but schools were probably poorly protected, if at all, against the effects of inflation on the purchasing power of their endowments - including, of course, the purchase of books.

Although there may well have been many practical teaching manuals in manuscript form, the printing press increased the tendency to uniformity of teaching methods and materials in schools. It also afforded wide influence to educational theorists and practitioners; but its power must not be exaggerated. A new book might be long in making its influence felt; and many schools would be unable to afford new text-books. The classical curriculum was of course designed to enable pupils to read and write in Latin, with a view to the production of future theologians, preachers, lawyers and gentlemen; but the ideal of full Latin literacy could not

be achieved at school level - and in any case, few saw its utility. Nevertheless, Latin had a tremendous impact on oral and written English, and the methods employed to teach both the classical and modern curricula demonstrate the dependence of each upon the other. However, this is perhaps hardly surprising in view of the growing tendency for both curricula to be taught in the same school; parallel pedagogical techniques would presumably be more economical, and might even be more effective, in both material and personnel terms.

The demanding length of the early modern school day has never been satisfactorily explained. It may have been a matter of simple economics - parents anxious that their children should learn as much as possible in the brief time at school which was all they could afford. It may betray a total lack of appreciation of children's inability to study effectively for long stretches at a time. It is more probable that the curriculum, which was very demanding in terms of the time needed for it to be covered in its entirety, was almost always put before the child. Teachers, and perhaps especially teachers of the classics, were less concerned with the development of the individual than with the acquisition by the individual of a given body of knowledge. Every moment was precious if two, three or even four languages were to be mastered in a few years. It is a truism that the child was regarded as a small adult, with no special requirements, and learning was seen as equivalent to discipline, as well as vice versa; but while there were objections to the methods used to achieve socialisation, it was commonly

accepted that socialisation was one of the prime functions (and virtues) of the school.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries mark a milestone in the attempt to 'school society'. The ideas of social humanism were deeply influential, and it was still accepted that the classical curriculum would fit each boy to fulfil his vocation within society; but there was a subtle interaction between the 'new' ideas of the Renaissance, the novel demands of the Tudor and Stuart monarchical state, and the traditional demands of English society. Despite the ideals and hopes of the Separatists, the hierarchy was not overthrown, and education became a tool for modifying, and even bolstering, the existing class structure, rather than transforming it, or overturning it. It certainly proved to be a powerful agent in the defeat of Roman Catholicism and the conversion of the people, even if with widely varying depths of conviction and commitment, to a distinctively English form of Protestantism; but nowhere is there even the slightest hint of a suggestion that education would enable people to make religious choices. Rather, it was seen as a means of acquainting the people with a new social and religious creed, i.e., service to the state, and conformity to a new set of religious beliefs. Knowledge and improvement, not revolution, were seen as the ends of the educational process. There was tension between the belief that schooling was valuable chiefly for its disciplinary effects, and the demands of parents for a different kind of curriculum; but neither of these had revolutionary implications. The schools were now having

to serve a different political and religious situation; by and large they succeeded in meeting this challenge through a pragmatic combination of late medieval educational ideas and techniques with Renaissance educational theory adapted to their own circumstances.

There are occasional references in the writings of the pioneer Separatists to the value and desirability of schools, such as Henry Barrow's declaration in favour of them, provided they met criteria consonant with Separatist convictions and attitudes, noted in chapter 3 below; but schooling per se was not at the top of the first Separatists' agenda. James Bowen is undoubtedly right in ascribing the growth of later Dissenting interest in schools to the combined effects of the anti-Nonconformist Acts of Parliament, collectively designated the Clarendon Code, which were passed into law between 1661 and 1673. In particular, many of the 2,000 or so clergy who were ejected from their livings in 1662 for refusing to comply with the Act of Uniformity turned to teaching to make up for their lost stipends, and began to establish private schools which came to be called Academies after Calvin's institution at Geneva. Doran and Durston make the interesting point that

The intensity of the persecution of Nonconformists under the Clarendon Code varied from year to year, and in some places its severity was mitigated by a local reluctance to implement it with its full rigour. None the less, during the course of Charles II's reign thousands of Dissenters were arrested and imprisoned and many of them languished for months or years in overcrowded and disease-ridden gaols ... Very few Dissenters, however, appear to have succumbed to this pressure and rejoined the Anglican church; indeed the years of persecution may have seen a small

increase in the numbers refusing to conform. That this persecution served merely to strengthen the resolve of the Dissenters and convince them of the surety of ultimate victory is illustrated by the appearance during these years of some of the greatest works of Nonconformist spiritual literature - books such as William Penn's No Cross, No Crown and John Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress and Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners ...⁶⁵

Bowen comments, "The seventeenth-century start was slow and [is] difficult to trace because these academies were clandestine; nonetheless by the eighteenth century they had become a significant movement".⁶⁶ H. McLachlan⁶⁷ lists 73 academies in existence between 1662 and 1843, 39 of which offered a wider general education than the predominantly theological curriculum available at the other 34. They varied considerably in their survival times, ranging from 3 or 4 years to more than 80; their longevity or otherwise appears to have been conditioned by such factors as the personality of the master, and the varying pressures for religious conformity during the 181 years or so during which the phenomenon manifested itself.

In the earliest phase, 1662-1689, the time closest to the period of interest to this study, 18 academies are documented,⁶⁸ although there would almost certainly have been others of which no records

⁶⁵ S. Doran and C. Durston, op. cit., 118

⁶⁶ J. Bowen, A History of Western Education III (London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1981) 134

⁶⁷ H. McLachlan, English Education Under the Test Acts: Being the History of The Nonconformist Academies 1662-1820 (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1931)

⁶⁸ H. McLachlan, op. cit., Appendix

survive. Ten more had emerged by 1700 as a result of the Act of Toleration of 1689. The movement was at its peak from 1690 to 1735, during which period 43 academies are recorded; a marked decline is apparent from the mid-eighteenth century, and the last one closed in 1843. By then the educational initiative of the Quaker Joseph Lancaster, who had opened a school for poor children in 1798 on principles which his supporter William Allen claimed provided the possibility of making "arrangements for the education of every poor child in the kingdom at a very trifling expense to the public", had resulted in the foundation of the Royal Lancasterian Society in 1808, which in 1814 became the British and Foreign School Society. This, though theoretically non-denominational, was in fact the Nonconformists' riposte to the avowedly Anglican National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church. From 1833 onwards both Societies became agents for the distribution of what soon became annual Government grants in aid of education; but Sir James Graham's Bill of 1843, which proposed that money raised through the Poor Rate should fund the provision of schools under the control of the Church of England, stimulated the emergence of the Voluntaryist movement, totally opposed to any form of state intervention, and advocating the end of Government grants and regulations. It succeeded in detaching the Congregational Board of Education, which by 1853 had 431 schools, and the Voluntary School Society, from the British Society; but by 1869 it had lost out to the irresistible pressure of the demands of the National Education League for such provisions as compulsory attendance,

and rate support for schools.⁶⁹

The Dissenting Academies undoubtedly represent the high-water mark of Nonconformist involvement in, and influence upon, formal schooling. They originated in the determination to provide an education for the sons of Dissenters who were excluded by the Clarendon Code from the two universities, and the many grammar schools associated with them through college endowments tied to specific schools. However, discrimination against them in the matter of education was steadily, if somewhat slowly, diluted. As a reward for their support for the accession of William III and Mary II in 1688, the penalties for Nonconforming teachers, though unrepealed, were left largely inoperative, with the consequence, explored above, that their academies were able to operate more openly, and to proliferate more widely. There was a period of anxiety for them during the ascendancy of the Tories in Queen Anne's reign, when Henry Sacheverell's virulent anti-Nonconformist campaign resulted in the Schism Act of 1714, which was designed to destroy their burgeoning educational system; but although the Act was not repealed until 1719, it remained a dead letter because of the accession of the House of Hanover to the throne in 1714, and the consequent return of the Whigs to power in 1715. Doran and Durston comment that

The gains of 1689 were confirmed and the survival of Protestant Dissent was finally assured. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Dissenting

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J. Lawson & H. Silver, A Social History of Education in England (London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1973) 268-275

community was to prove one of the most dynamic elements, not only in the spheres of religion and spirituality, but also in the political and industrial development of modern Britain.⁷⁰

De facto toleration of Nonconformist educational activity was eventually legalised by the Dissenting Schoolmasters Relief Act of 1779. Rosemary O'Day comments

There is a real sense in which the dissenting academies were providing lay dissenters with the university education which was deliberately denied them in England and for which they had previously had to go to Scotland. In addition, this type of education tended to perpetuate the principal characteristics of English nonconformity - an interest in practical theology; a rationalist approach to learning; a tendency towards experimental, empirical study of science.⁷¹

They maintained a strong interest in the preparation of candidates for the ministries of the three denominations - Congregational, Baptist and Presbyterian; but their distinctive achievement was to provide an education which in the first half of the eighteenth century came to outshine that available at the Anglican preserves of Oxford and Cambridge, both in width of curricula and in levels of excellence. The maintenance of a high moral tone, compared to that prevailing in the two ancient universities, contributed not a little to the appeal of the academies to devout Anglican families, who increasingly sent their sons to them for an education which embraced rigorous intellectual standards, as well as modern curricula. It was the Dissenting Academies which set the pace for

⁷⁰ S. Doran & C. Durston, op. cit., 120

⁷¹ R. O'Day, op. cit., (1982) 215

educational reform in England, with attempts on the part of some of them to implement the theories of Hartlib, Comenius, Petty and Dury; and it was the Dissenting Academies which educated men of the calibre of Thomas Secker, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1758 to 1768, Bishop Butler, author of The Analogy of Religion, and Joseph Priestley, amongst other things, discoverer of oxygen. H.C. Barnard wrote

It is possible that the importance of the nonconformist academies in English education has not always been sufficiently recognised ... they kept the torch of true education burning at a time when the two national universities were dormant. The nonconformist academies employed rational teaching methods, they encouraged freedom of enquiry, they strove to satisfy the needs of the upper middle classes for a practical, modern education which the universities and the public schools made no attempt to supply. They are, indeed, the forerunners of our modern universities.⁷²

(iv) Did the universities exercise any decisive influence in the educational arena?

The universities in early modern England were essentially ecclesiastical institutions. They had originated as societies of masters or teachers who were all clergy; and the church had maintained control of them through its continuing monopoly of the licensing power. In the later Middle Ages, however, the two Chancellors gradually became more identified with university than with church interests; and the universities themselves claimed first that they came under the direct jurisdiction of the Archbishops of

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H. Barnard, A History of English Education from 1760 (London, University of London Press Ltd., 1969) 30

Canterbury rather than of the Bishops of Lincoln and Ely, and then, having won this case, of the Pope alone. Simultaneously there was a growing tendency for them to derive their privileges from the crown. These two developments converged in the first half of the sixteenth century when the crown, having declared itself Head or Supreme Governor of the Church of England, claimed the right to the entire obedience of the universities. Now they could be adapted to serve a new purpose, and not necessarily a religious one; the Tudor drive towards secularisation meant that after the dissolution of the monasteries the universities were unique among ecclesiastical institutions in their direct relationship with the crown.

In Elizabeth's reign the project to establish an educated parochial ministry almost inevitably entailed the concept of a university education;

Since Church leaders wanted a better-educated clergy who could teach Protestant doctrine and scriptural knowledge, they raised standards for ordination, and so made it more likely that the candidates would attend university. In 1571 the bishops declared that they would ordain only those who had been educated 'either in the university or some other inferior school', had some competence in Latin and the scriptures and had not worked in 'base and handicraft labour'. In 1575 further articles required ordinands to give an account of their faith in Latin, and insisted that new priests should be at least 24 years old. Although these rules did not stipulate that ministers must be graduates, they demanded high educational attainments and, by delaying ordination and prohibiting labour, encouraged tertiary study. Although admission statistics are problematical, it seems there was now a flow of would-be clerics into the universities, where they learned Reformed theology and prepared for the ministry. The universities became training colleges for clergy, and, at Cambridge, Emmanuel (1584) and Sidney Sussex (1596) were founded as Protestant seminaries ... Not all graduates were preachers (and

not all preachers were graduates), but the supply of educated evangelists boomed ... almost everywhere the activists were university men.⁷³

But the church hierarchy was not strong enough to exercise direct control over teaching institutions. "Among the authorities ... there was ... concern that the universities would become centres for the wider preaching of heresy."⁷⁴ The universities were thus able to nurture, first, criticism of the established church, and later, full-blown nonconformity.

Protestant leaders were clear that regular sermons were needed for the spread of Protestantism and the saving of souls ... [But] where were the preachers to come from? The universities ... Protestants gained effective, if not exclusive, control of the universities in the first decade of Elizabeth's reign. ... A rising proportion of Elizabethan ministers had experience of these Protestant universities.⁷⁵

The production of ministers came to be regarded as only a part of their raison d'être; and they introduced elements into the curriculum which shocked the church hierarchy. The universities were still seminaries for young ministers; "The revenues from ex-monastic property ... helped to fund new Regius professorships at Oxford and Cambridge and to maintain students and readers in divinity at both universities."⁷⁶ but they now assumed a new function as nurseries for the gentry, a development which brought them into the sphere of interest of the civic, as well as of the ecclesiastical authorities -

⁷³ C. Haigh, op. cit., 270

⁷⁴ Ibid., 61

⁷⁵ C. Haigh, op. cit., 269

⁷⁶ S. Doran and C. Durston, op. cit., 167

Henry VIII's consultation of them over the legality of his marriage to Katherine of Aragon illustrates the point well. The grant of charters of incorporation in 1571 left no-one in any doubt that their privileges, liberties and franchises were now to be regarded as deriving from the crown (in Parliament) alone. After 1604 they each sent two Members to Parliament, while their lack of representation in Convocation had the effect of confirming their independence from the church. Most of the Chancellors after the Reformation were laymen, and the developing lay character of the universities was reflected by changes in the composition of their student bodies; and as a consequence the attitude of society to the role of the universities also changed. There was a marked change in their perceived functions between 1540 and 1640; the number of undergraduates at both universities increased enormously from 1560 onwards, due largely to an influx of well-born lay students.⁷⁷ The English ruling class became convinced of the need for a humanistic education for its sons, and the colleges met the demand by providing personal and academic tuition for young gentlemen and young noblemen.

Scholars have debated vigorously whether the increase in the size of the undergraduate body was more apparent than real. Expansion there certainly was; "It seems that admissions to universities increased markedly, suggesting that education was now thought

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M. Curtis, Oxford and Cambridge in Transition (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1959) *passim*.
 L. Stone, "The Educational Revolution in England, 1560-1640" Past and Present, 28 (1964) *passim*.
 H. Kearney, Scholars and Gentlemen: Universities and Society (London, Faber and Faber, 1970) *passim*

important."⁷⁸ But it was probably far more gradual than historians have allowed. Equally, the alleged change in the social composition of the universities may be partly illusory;⁷⁹ but the expansion of the teaching work of the colleges in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is not disputed. College lecturers began to attract undergraduates away from the university's public lectures; and by the later sixteenth century college teaching rather than university teaching of students was established at both Oxford and Cambridge. This may go some way towards explaining the considerable increase in student numbers, since the presence in the university of undergraduates who were not on the foundation of a college, or resident in hall, went unrecorded until they were brought under the auspices of a teaching college. The increase in numbers after 1564 was more probably due to the intensification of a medieval trend, rather than a dramatic change in the way university education was viewed. English humanists did not regard universities as appropriate for the training of statesmen or gentlemen; their annexation for these purposes occurred by default because of the failure of the many sixteenth-century schemes for academies with curricula dissimilar from those of the universities. Since the crown declined to adapt the Inns of Court, the gentry had perforce to utilise the existing institutions, the universities; despite the latter's concentration on the education of ecclesiastics, they did

⁷⁸ C. Haigh, op. cit., 276

⁷⁹ E. Russell, "The Influx of Commoners into the University of Oxford before 1581: An Optical Illusion?" English Historical Review, 92, (1977) 721-745

have some experience of educating members of the lay elite, and they appeared to be willing to extend this experience.

There were extensive consequences to this development. Haigh affirms that

[At the start of Elizabeth's reign] there was a serious shortage of clergy. The influenza epidemic of 1558, the deprivations and resignations of 1559, and a continuing wastage as discontented priests abandoned their cures, left benefices vacant and churches unserved ... The new bishops plugged the gaps as best they could. They began by dropping qualifications for ordination.⁸⁰

The ruling class discovered a fresh and convincing justification for its position of influence, in the new social humanist ideology of virtue achieved through education, which would fit them to exercise leadership and patronage in both state and church. Perhaps inevitably, the universities became socially segregated communities; pressure exerted by upper-class parents resulted in tutors tending to neglect their responsibilities to plebeian students in the interests of those from patrician backgrounds. Upper-class usurpation of places intended for the sons of the poor is increasingly a feature of the universities in the early seventeenth century; Queen's College, Oxford, and Jesus College, Cambridge, positively vaunted their ability to cater for fashionable students at this time.

Under such pressures, university teachers themselves began to think more in terms of educating the gentry, rather than seeing all their students through an academic degree course; but statistics

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C. Haigh, op. cit., 249

reveal that the universities were far from sending significant numbers of men into secular professions, or government work. "Emmanuel and Sidney Sussex Colleges at Cambridge ... were created for the sole and express purpose of 'rendering as many persons as possible fit for the sacred ministry of the Word and Sacraments.'"⁸¹ 7.8% of the students at Emmanuel College, Cambridge between 1596 and 1645 for example, entered these arenas; 41.3% went into the ministry, but perhaps as many as 50% (3,391 in total) entered the college for a short period only, in order to achieve a veneer of humane learning, and the improved status which went with it.⁸² Lawrence Stone holds that demand for a university education for prospective country gentlemen was entirely a matter of social convention, since it had no obvious utility whatsoever; but O'Day argues that students and their parents regarded it as strictly utilitarian, and geared closely to their vocation as gentlemen - "the ruling classes in both Court and country did feel that the universities were offering a desirable commodity".⁸³ Not only was there social segregation; relationships evolved between the gentry and particular colleges which reinforced local loyalties. This shift in emphasis from the universities to their constituent colleges is accepted by other writers: "'university' men were, in reality, 'college' men; it was the college ... which drew

⁸¹ S. Doran and C. Durston, op. cit., 148

⁸² R. Tyler, "The Children of Disobedience: The Social Composition of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, 1596-1645" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1976) 100

⁸³ R. O'Day, op. cit., (1982) 97

men's loyalties".⁸⁴

A university education, then, was believed to fit the sons of gentlemen to serve the state and to live the lives of gentlemen more appropriately, and to prepare professionals for the adequate performance of their vocations; but the universities still educated two groups of students only - trainee gentlemen and intending clerics. Christopher Haigh observes that:

The bishops could not produce an all-graduate, all-preaching clergy, but they did try to keep out candidates who would not be able to teach the faith. After the frantic recruitment of the early years of Elizabeth's reign, entry standards were raised for ordinands ... Year by year clerical standards improved" ... and ... "The bishops' vigorous encouragement of education ... to them meant both the eradication of heresy and the improvement of clerical standards ... Six bishops shared in the foundation of five university colleges between 1496 and 1525, and five of them drafted or supervised college statutes which emphasised the training of priests by preaching and theological study. Some of the new colleges were planned as centres of the humanistic 'new learning' to contribute to an intellectual as well as an educational reform.⁸⁵

There was never any thought that university education should be open to all. The majority of students were very young - in 1637-1639 the median age was about 17.1. They were expected to study subjects consecutively, not concurrently - i.e., courses exhibited clearly marked progression. However, the expansion of the teaching functions of the colleges, and the growth in the

⁸⁴ V. Morgan, "Cambridge University and the 'Country'" in L. Stone (ed.), The University in Society (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1974) I, 183-245

⁸⁵ C. Haigh, op. cit., 272

numbers of non-serious students, tended to reduce in students' eyes the importance of the university curriculum, and its degree requirements. Nevertheless, in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the BA degree appears to have gained status as an end in itself through collegiate teaching, at the expense of the arts course as expressed in university statutes; and the full MA course also became increasingly popular. The new lease of life acquired by the seven-year arts course may be attributed to its perceived value and potential relevance for the training of Protestant clergymen; certainly the 'generalist' education grafted onto the universities during the late Tudor and early Stuart period was never formalised, and speedily withered and died when the gentry fled the universities after 1642. In the early seventeenth century university requirements seemed less important than college requirements, and were being evaded by large numbers of students. The colleges provided more satisfactory teaching than the lectures and disputations laid down by the university statutes; such lectures had become an optional way of obtaining information and ideas, peripheral to the more fundamental approach of the tutorial and the college lecture. Disputations remained important academic hurdles; but preparation for them came increasingly under the aegis of the colleges, and growing numbers of students could, and did, ignore these public displays of learning in their own education.

The unique contribution of the colleges to teaching method, however, was the one-to-one relationship between student and tutor. Tutors came to be concerned for the needs of the individual

student, and his purpose in attending the university; and the quality of a student's education soon came to depend on the conscientious behaviour of his tutor. It became customary for the tutor to design a course of study for the student, and to prepare pre-digested materials for the latter to use. Printed books were by now widely available, and texts could also be hired for copying out, or summarising - students were expected to make digests from the books they read, and common-placing was an entrenched study method. Furthermore, the tutor was himself always a student - as he acquired skills and knowledge he passed them on to his pupils.

Libraries were unplanned. The extent to which humanistic studies infiltrated college libraries between 1500 and 1535 was certainly merely a matter of chance. Early sixteenth-century Fellows bought and borrowed medieval scholastic works, apparently untouched by contemporary interest in textual criticism and the classics. However, as interest in these areas developed, so did a movement to bring the contents of college libraries into line with the changing curriculum; but scholasticism remained as significant a part of the holdings of libraries as it did of the university curriculum. Nevertheless, the deliberate acquisition of patristic, legal and classical materials is notable.⁸⁶ Libraries also increased notably in size after the arrival of printing; but tragically, many manuscripts, often unbound, were either sold or simply destroyed at the Reformation.

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E. Jacob (ed.), Sir Edmund Craster, The History of All Souls College Library (London, Faber and Faber, 1971) 20, 37-40

Undergraduate use of the university libraries was restricted, and there was no lending; but Fellows and College Foundationers had easy access to working collections of books. Undergraduates had to rely on buying books, borrowing among themselves or from a tutor, and hiring texts from bookshops. Studies of student book purchases run the risk of suggesting certainty where there is none; poorer students, and many of the clergy, were probably not introduced to non-required works because they could not afford them, and because they played no direct part in their formal education.

Adaptation of the curriculum to meet new needs appears to have been informal. "John Fisher ... as Chancellor of ... Cambridge [had] encouraged the study of the three Biblical languages (Hebrew, Greek and Latin) ... Thomas Wolsey ... in drawing up the statutes for Cardinal College at Oxford [had] prescribed the study of classical texts."⁸⁷ The seven-year arts course, modified to suit sixteenth-century humanist and Protestant ideology, served either wholly or in part the needs of both clerical and lay students. Such multi-purpose courses, like their originating universities, made more than a gesture to the needs of the lay elite, while still responding to the needs of the newly-established Church of England. These needs were felt to be complementary, rather than contradictory; but there was some dissatisfaction with the provision for lay students. The curriculum was criticised as irrelevant for the young gentleman,

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S. Doran and C. Durston, op. cit., 125

even in subjects potentially useful to the man of affairs, largely because lecturers and tutors were thought to emphasise wrong aspects; and it was also under pressure from the future clergy. It smacked little of the Renaissance, and much of the Middle Ages. Rhetoric assumed a new importance, and new relevance was attributed to logic. As chapter 3 below demonstrates, it was these two emphases in the university curriculum which drew the especial ire of the first English Separatists. Ramism was influential for a time. Pierre de la Ramee's attack upon Aristotelian metaphysics and logic appealed to radical Protestants, and it gained a foothold in Cambridge, and also at Magdalene College, Oxford, in the reign of Elizabeth I. Based upon the idea that knowledge is accessible to all men, no matter how humble they may be, it was anti-hierarchical, it emphasised the utility of knowledge, and in the universities it became closely associated with clerical puritanism. Ramism appealed to many at Cambridge, but far fewer at Oxford; but the principal late sixteenth-century producers of clergymen were certainly under its influence. Predictably, however, there was a reaction against it in the reigns of the early Stuarts.

Ramism tended to a much more radical response to society and the church. Its impact was undoubtedly far greater than the brevity and relative incompleteness of its influence might suggest. It was adapted to English uses by Puritan academics and preachers who educated hundreds of clergymen, who in their turn spread these attitudes even further. Influenced by Ramee's views, Puritan writers developed a concept of calling which taught that men did

not inherit a position in society - they chose, or were chosen by God for, a position. The stress laid on talent and individual aptitude made birth seem relatively unimportant. Although Ramism's anti-hierarchical approach appeared to challenge the accepted government in both church and state, it may in fact have served to legitimise and bestow respectability upon, the pre-existent tendencies of English clerical Puritans, and make possible the further extension of their influence. It certainly appears to have facilitated Protestant churchmen's attempts to adapt the English university system to the needs of the church as they perceived them. The inevitable reaction against Ramism was, however, eventually taken over by extremists scheming to implement radical changes in an entirely different direction.

As a result of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century modifications of the university arts courses, the education which students actually received differed in emphasis from that laid down in university statutes - it was more humanistic in character. University teaching lost its hold on undergraduates as colleges mediated the university syllabus, and began subtly to transform it through the dominance of the tutorial system. The ambiguous status in the university of the college tutor allowed him to respond to parents' and students' wishes, as well as the demands of college and university statutes. A wide variety of individual needs was accommodated in the expanding and developing universities, so that it is not appropriate to think of gentle students receiving one type of education, and clerical students another.

The first Separatists engaged very much more directly with the issue of the universities in their time, than they did with that of the schools. Trenchant criticism of their ambience and its effect upon the youthful students who frequented them, of their attitude, particularly to the preparation of candidates for ordination to the ministry of the church, of the arrogance of their graduates, and above all, of the curriculum they offered as the basis of education for life, is a common thread running through the writings of the early Separatist leaders. Foreman comments, "Browne and Barrow were extremely critical of the university education provided for intending clergy"⁸⁸ and "Those who had been so educated were an élite, possessing special privileges and powers which ran counter to the more democratic ideals of the Separatists".⁸⁹

The Separatists were so much more closely concerned with the matter of the universities because these latter were so heavily involved in the education of the clergy, and thus with the character of the church - and it was the church which was at the centre of Separatist pre-occupations. This issue is therefore of primary significance to my thesis, and is dealt with in detail in the appropriate places, mainly in chapter 3 below, where the objections of Browne and Barrow in particular are considered. I make the point that despite the, to twentieth-century sensitivities, strident expression of immoderate views, weight must be attached to the

⁸⁸ H. Foreman, op. cit. (1976) 57

⁸⁹ Ibid., 439

writers' opinions because they were themselves products of the system of which they were so critical. Indeed, taking into account the leaders noticed in chapter 4 as well, it emerges that 19 out of the 20 mentioned had been to one or other of the two universities - 15 to Cambridge, 3 to Oxford, and 1 (John Penry) to both. The criticisms they made must be taken seriously, because they wrote from the vantage-point of their own personal experience. Their successors as leaders continued to enjoy the advantages of university education throughout the reigns of James I and Charles I, culminating in the apogee of the Independent ascendancy during the years of the Commonwealth and the Protectorate in the 1650's. During this decade the Independents (the linear descendants of the original Separatists) took advantage of their dominance to implement a programme of much-needed reforms in the University of Oxford. Thomas Goodwin, educated at Cambridge, became President of Magdalene College, Oxford, and a member of the University Board of Visitors, while John Owen, himself an Oxford man, was appointed Dean of Christ Church in 1651, and was Vice-Chancellor of the University from 1652 to 1657, when he undertook a reform of the University's statutes and ceremonies.

All of this, however, came to an abrupt end with the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660. Prominent Independents such as William Greenhill (c. 1591-1671), Philip Nye (1596-1672), William Bridge (1600-1671), Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680), Thomas Brooks (1608-1680) and John Owen (1616-1683) were unceremoniously bundled out of their ecclesiastical livings and/or

university posts within months of the accession of Charles II; and as a consequence of the Acts of Parliament between 1661 and 1673 which constituted the so-called Clarendon Code, the Dissenters entered a wilderness of exile from the ancient seats of learning and their feeder-schools from which they were not officially allowed to emerge until religious tests were finally abolished at Oxford, Cambridge and Durham in 1871.

v) What specific provision, if any, was made for the education of the clergy?

The majority of the students who took degrees at the universities appear to have entered the church. Grammar school and university education had traditionally been reserved for the clerical elite - poor vicars, curates and parish priests rarely possessed more than a modicum of education; but the new Protestant Church of England was already developing a distinctive attitude to education. The ancient justification for the clergy, as mediators between God and man, had been undermined by the Reformation; in mid-sixteenth century England the vacuum was filled by an insistence upon the need for a preaching and pastoral ministry, and education was seen as the means to this end. The church at first attempted to control and exploit existing educational institutions in the interest of producing suitable new recruits; but, frightened by the spectre of nonconformity, both crown and hierarchy took up the idea that the clergy should be well-educated, conformist pastors, supporting the religious, political and social status quo, not opening their mouths on controversial issues, and making their separation from the laity

quite plain. At the same time, just as the hierarchy was losing interest in the vocational content of institutionalised education for the ministry, potential recruits were showing increasing interest in the rise in social status which a university education was perceived to offer. Thus the education earlier seen as a means of improving the ministry, came to be regarded as a means of consolidating the clergy's claim to be a gentle profession.⁹⁰

The Reformers defined the ministerial role in terms of a service being offered to the laity; but the clergy were ill-equipped to do this adequately. At the same time, the Protestant Church did not reject the great heritage of Biblical scholarship - indeed, it emphasized its importance for the parish priests' practical work. Most English Protestants accepted that the clergy needed a strong intellectual background, and carefully supervised training, to enable them to discharge their pastoral functions properly. Education was therefore viewed as the handmaiden of Protestantism; so, faced with a church staffed by thousands of poorly-educated, conservative clergymen, early Protestantism gave priority over a university education to competence in Scriptural knowledge, and the training-up of clergymen from an early age.

Three broad categories of qualification for the clerical profession may be discerned during the reign of Elizabeth I - reputation, vocation and education. Each provided a check on the others. Education not only enabled the minister to fulfil his vocation; it also

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R. O'Day, The English Clergy, 1560-1640 (Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1979) 24-32, 126-143

confirmed that he had a life-long commitment to that vocation - i.e., it was a way of sorting out dedicated professionals from mere opportunists. In the 1560's and 1570's, it would have been futile to demand that all ordinands should have a university education - the questions administered at ordination were clearly designed to establish little more than that the candidate was literate, and possessed a knowledge of Latin. In 1571, for example, ordinands were required to give an account of their faith in Latin;⁹¹ and it was considered desirable that if possible, they should be university graduates. This represents the first formal recognition of the universities as seminaries for the pastoral ministry; not only the theologian and the prominent churchman, but also the average parish priest, was to be encouraged to study, to help to prepare him for his ministry. Indeed, a late age (23) of initial entry into orders left young would-be ordinands with little alternative but to immerse themselves in long periods of study. The Articles of 1585 posited a wholly graduate clergy as the ideal; but at the very least they should be well-versed in the Scriptures, and able to give a good account of their faith in Latin.

A system of in-service training would be likely to prove far more traditional than formal schooling. The educational methods of the universities, and of the Inns of Court, bore strong resemblances to the passing-on of skills from master to apprentice. Homilies, and the printed catechism, were temporary stop-gaps in the absence of an educated preaching ministry; but during the 1570's Elizabeth

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Idem, 50

became convinced that the system was in the hands of dissidents. Prophesyings (meetings for preaching and prayer) were curtailed, and attempts were made to tighten episcopal control of in-service training. The emphasis passed from preaching to conformity and respectability, and the Elizabethan Church thenceforth held up the university-educated preacher/pastor as its ideal. But the ideal was unrealistic in the early years of the reign; not only had the universities declined in size and reputation, but they had no experience of producing graduate clergymen for pastoral care. At the same time, just when the church needed more control of the universities, they were falling under increasing secular control, and were being commandeered by the nobility and gentry to provide their sons with a liberal classical education. The church consequently found itself powerless to control the education offered to potential clergymen at the universities - after the Reformation Cambridge had no ecclesiastical Chancellors, and Oxford only two, Archbishops Bancroft and Laud; the universities, and subsequently the colleges, remained in control of the curriculum.

But although the church favoured a graduate ministry, a university education for intending clergymen proved in practice to be the product of more generalised forces within society. A university education was first a passport to social status, and only subsequently to office and position in the Church of England; and plebeian students flocked to the universities to take advantage of the situation. Patronage, servitorships, sizarships and scholarships enabled upper artisans or yeomen to send their sons to university -

50% of Oxford students were of plebeian origin in the 1570's and 1580's. More than five hundred scholarships were available to poor students between 1560 and 1640, most of whom wanted to enter the church. The growing demand from the church for educated ministers was reflected in the noticeable increase in the proportion of sons of the clergy at some colleges; and by the late sixteenth century the new Protestant career route to the ministry was effectively open to plebeians. But then these new clergymen set up their own boundaries to prevent excessive mobility into their ranks, by re-imposing restrictions on the opportunities available to youths from the lower classes. Consequently, by the 1620's it was no positive competitive asset in the church to possess a degree, but it remained a detriment not to hold one. A degree had in effect become a necessary seal of approval; but there were still many poorly-educated clerics lingering in benefices.

Most graduates entering the church's parochial ministry between the 1550's and the outbreak of the Civil Wars were Bachelors of Arts or Masters of Arts; but in neither case had the university curriculum provided Scriptural training, or advice on preaching and pastoral work. Students were versed in Latin, and the techniques of translation and criticism, and they were trained in oratorical skills, rhetoric and logic; but they knew little Greek, and less Hebrew. They had the preaching technique, but not the word to preach. Specific preparation for the ministry depended largely upon chance, although Puritan colleges attempted to provide genuine practical pastoral training; but college procedures were insufficiently

institutionalised, and degree requirements too secular, to ensure high standards among intending ordinands. It was entirely possible to obtain a degree without undertaking any formal studies related to the ministry, and to use this degree as an entry qualification for Orders. In effect, the Church of England prior to 1640 had attempted to continue the practice of the unreformed church in sustaining a 'mystery' in the medieval sense, by an apparent determination to hide the Scriptures from ordinary people behind obscure language and incomprehensible techniques⁹² - a determination which aroused the particular opposition of the earliest Separatists; it was the complaint of men such as Browne, Barrow and Greenwood, among others, that the clergy were keeping the laity out of the church, instead of teaching them in simple language in order to bring them in as full participants.

There was certainly enough evidence, even if only in a negative form, for the construction of a distinctive Separatist philosophy of clerical education. "In the mid-1570's about four-fifths of ministers could not preach."⁹³ They were very concerned about the poor quality of the majority of the Anglican clergy of their day, and very forthright about their shortcomings. They appear to be comprehensively justified in their opinions by the statistics and comments recorded in a series of lists drawn up by Puritan leaders in 1593, the year of the martyrdoms of Barrow, Greenwood and

⁹² R. O'Day, Education and Society 1500-1800 (London and New York, Longman, 1982) 142

⁹³ C. Haigh, op. cit., 268

Penry. The clergymen in eleven counties (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Cornwall, Essex, Lincolnshire, Middlesex, Norfolk, Oxfordshire, Rutland, Surrey and Warwickshire) and the City and Archdeaconry of London, were allocated to one or other of two groups according as to whether they were fit for their office and capable of preaching, or were disqualified by ignorance, idleness or immorality. In the 2,537 parishes listed, there were 472 preachers, and 1,733 'no preachers'. 353 clergymen were noted as being non-resident, and around 467 as being double-beneficed. Of one it is commented that "he by misdemeanour spoiled his patrimonie, became a minstrel, and for refuge a minister". Another "was a painter and an Interlude plaier". After two names are the words "a conjuror suspected". Mr. John Beale of Juxta Fowey deserves special mention - he was "the best wrastler in Cornwall". After many Warwickshire names there is the note "he was a popish priest"; and after one of those, John Frith, vicar of Grafton, it is noted that "he can neither preach nor read well, his chiefest trade is to cure hawks that are hurt or diseased, for which purpose many do usuallie repaire to him".⁹⁴ Christopher Haigh's comments go some way towards accounting for this state of affairs:

There was ... no formal preparation for priesthood. Probably 90 per cent of priests had acquired all their learning at a local school ... Those who attended the universities found little in the syllabuses which related to parish work ... There were examinations before ordination ... but it was difficult to hold back the flow

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A. Peel (ed.), The Seconde Parte of A Register, being a Calendar of Manuscripts under that title intended for publication by the Puritans about 1593 (2 vols., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1915) x xi (From the Preface to vol. I by C. Firth)

of ordinands and hard to be thorough when queues were long. Examiners seemed reluctant to reject any who could reach minimum standards, and there was little attempt to be more selective as supply boomed ... It is probable that the tests were not searching."⁹⁵

Obviously these views are partial and prejudiced; there are still extant surveys made for the bishops which undoubtedly present a more favourable picture, both of individuals, and of the clergy as a whole. "Several bishops instituted candidates only on condition that they undertook further study."⁹⁶ On the other hand, the Separatists would certainly have endorsed these judgements wholeheartedly. That their strictures were not in fact wildly partisan is borne out by the report of Bishop Hooper's visitation of his See of Gloucester in 1551, printed by Dr. James Gardiner in the English Historical Review for 1904. This shows that most of the clergy in that diocese were ignorant, and some excessively ignorant. It is, however, important to note Haigh's comment on this:

At Gloucester [Bishop] Hooper ... examined his parish clergy on the Bible and the Creed ... only seventy-nine of the 311 examined were satisfactory from a reformist point of view⁹⁷ ... The Gloucester figures have often been used to argue that parish clergy were uneducated and stupid; they show rather that priests did not yet know the English Bible."⁹⁸

There is no reason to suppose that those of other dioceses were better; though Haigh records that "At Cardinal Morton's visitation

⁹⁵ C. Haigh, op. cit., 42

⁹⁶ Ibid., 43

⁹⁷ Ibid., 178

⁹⁸ Ibid., 314 note 47

of Suffolk in 1499 ... only two priests were suspended for their ignorance ... [and] At Archbishop Warham's visitation of 260 Kent parishes in 1511-1512 ... four priests were said to be ignorant."⁹⁹ In 1530 ... twenty-one priests ... were banned from service in the diocese [of London] ... because of their ignorance ... [but] the London investigation ... tells us very little ... the examinations survive for only about half of the City curates, and the bishop may have concentrated on those thought to be insufficient; certainly he was examining curates, rather than the better-educated incumbents";¹⁰⁰ and the revolutions through which the church passed after 1551 were not calculated to increase the learning and efficiency of the clergy. "The visitors of Chichester diocese in 1569 found only seventeen preachers for all Sussex: 'many churches there have no sermons, not one in seven years, and some not one in twelve years.' The consequences were predictable: 'Except it be about Lewes and a little in Chichester, the whole diocese is very blind and superstitious for want of teaching.'"¹⁰¹ Although Peel acknowledges "some little improvement as the reign went on", he concludes that "by 1603 nothing in the nature of a well-equipped, well-supported ministry had been obtained."¹⁰²

All this seemed to be at odds with the original message of the Reformers. Education, seen in the mid-sixteenth century as an

⁹⁹ Ibid., 41

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 40-41

¹⁰¹ Ibid., quoting VCH Sussex ii 24-6

¹⁰² English Historical Review, 1911, 341

agent of social mobility and ease of communication, was now the buttress of monopoly. It had become joined with ownership of land as a source of authority and power. It therefore now seemed important to churchmen to gain - or perhaps regain - control of education, and to restrict access to it from other social groups; certainly this is what the sectaries felt had happened by the mid-seventeenth century. It had become a social issue; to succeed, plebeian youth had to move out of its class, and assume the manners, lifestyle and values of gentlemen. At university, potential clergymen pursued the arts course in the company of young gentlemen, and hoped that some of the status of their fellow students would rub off onto them. Inevitably, such training, even when it was effective, fitted, young men for a pastoral ministry among scholars and gentlemen, rather than among yeomen and husbandmen, artisans and trademen, or the urban and rural uneducated poor, all of which groups together formed the bulk of the population. In these circumstances, widespread technical literacy became irrelevant; much more than the mere ability to read and write was needed to understand sermons - the congregation too often needed a classical grammar school and university education on a par with that of their minister if they were to benefit from his sermons. This inevitably created a barrier between the minister and his flock. When ministers overcame these obstacles it was because they came under the influence of a non-academic tradition, that of the reformed pastor, modelled on the pattern Calvin and his disciples had evolved in Geneva. This tradition operated through the printed word much more than through

institutionalised channels; it was voluntary and influential, but it was not academic in its emphasis, and neither the Anglican hierarchy nor the Puritan caucus felt at home with it. Ministers rooted in Independency met regularly to discuss doctrine and practice; and many Puritan ministers welcomed young men into their households for pastoral training.¹⁰³ Eminent Puritan divines were approached to educate particular individuals; and clerical associations, supervision by an experienced minister and preacher, and pastoral manuals all provided important sources of vocational education to the late Tudor and early Stuart clergymen.

All this sprang from the Puritan wing of the church. It is significant that this supplementary vocational education took place on the job, through uninstitutionalised channels. It is also significant that the most sweeping criticism of university education came from university members, although the outcry of the sectaries bore no real fruit - the settled educated ministry remained in place, and it was probably important for both society and the established church that it did so. All the same, sixteenth-century Protestant churchmen wanted to use education for the revolutionary end of producing a new kind of ministry, in line with the Reformed doctrine emanating from Geneva; but Elizabeth I did not sympathise with these aspirations. Furthermore, the universities, seen by radicals as the chosen instruments for their purposes, had only recently achieved an independence of sorts from the church; and they were

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R. O'Day, The English Clergy, 1560-1640 (Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1979) 167-170

understandably determined to cling to that independence. They were coming increasingly under the influence of the nobility and gentry, who demanded provision for their own educational needs; so, although they continued to educate clergymen, the control exercised by the church over this process was both erratic and indirect.

Comparison of the early seventeenth-century parish clergyman with his counterpart of a hundred years earlier makes it clear that a revolution had taken place in educational standards; but the important fact is that this revolution was not the one which the mid sixteenth-century Protestant Reformers had had in mind. Seventeenth-century clergymen were incontestably better off educationally in humanist terms; but such improvements as had occurred were the result of in-service training and the Puritan tradition, rather than the efforts of the universities or the grammar schools. Only those who believed that an education identical to that of a gentleman was adequate for a clergyman could believe that a satisfactory reformation had occurred. The church failed to append vocational training onto the university arts course because both politics and tradition stood in the way. The crown and the ecclesiastical hierarchy regarded loyalty, and specifically political loyalty, as the prime qualification for a clergyman; and the universities were determined to cling to their traditional monopoly of clerical education. The clerical profession, highly organised though it was, suffered because it could not control the recruitment and education of its own personnel.

The main burden of such Separatist writings on the education of the clergy as are still extant is negative. It consists of criticism ranging from what would today be regarded as relatively mild and reasonable, to the scandalously defamatory. Robert Browne and Henry Barrow in particular were wholly uninhibited in their prolific denunciations of the faults and failings of the methods prevailing in their day in the preparation of would-be ordinands; I have attempted to present a representative sample of their criticisms in chapter 3 below. It is all the more important, therefore, to be aware that the seeming imbalance in their comments can, and in all fairness must, be redressed, even if only to a limited extent, by taking into account positive and constructive observations, where these can be found. Here, for example, is a positive proposal from Robert Browne for the replacement in the education of the clergy of the logic of which he and his fellow pioneer Separatist leaders were so scornful.

Having first the knowledge of that tongue and speech, wherein we reade the Scriptures, and being assured eyther by our owne iudgement and skill in the languages, or by the faithfulness of the Church in receyuing true translations, that the text is not corrupted: we must then looke out the true meaning and doctrine of the wordes ... Then must we searche out wherefore such doctrine is shewed by such wordes, if the wordes be doubtfull, or harde to vnderstande ... Also we must finde out the agreement and difference of the doctrine from other pointes of diuinitie, and what is the order and following of the matter ... Further we must take heede to all doubttes and questions, that may well be gathered and followe vpon it ...

Then may we further declare the contrarie thereof, and make both of them plaine, by some parable, similitude, or ceremonie of the olde lawe ... But chieflie the applying must not be forgotten. For

defaultes and errores, must be improved by the Scriptures, with rebuke, and iudgements, denounced as there is cause, and the truth must be proued ... Exhortation also must be vused with confirming and strengthninge of the weaker ...

So that in handling of the Scriptures we looke to these thinges, yet not as straitlie to them all, but that by occasion we omitt and let passe some of them. And though we be more carefull in them at the firste, tyll we be skilfull, yet afterwarde it will be easie to meditate, write, or speake of the Scriptures, with more readines and lesse labour.¹⁰⁴

On the evidence of this comment, Browne appears to have taken for granted a prior grounding for would-be clergymen in Latin and Greek, and presumably Hebrew as well ('our owne iudgement and skill in the languages'); but he makes a very considerable leap in assuming the competence to ascertain 'that the text is not corrupted' - generations of Biblical scholars would have dearly loved to be possessed of that confidence! It is worth commenting that this passage implies a clerical education wider than sole training in the 'handling of the Scriptures'; that of course was both fons et origo and terminus ad quem for the Separatists' conception of the right education of the clergy, but Browne appears to envisage an intellectually more comprehensive training when he writes of looking out 'the true meaning and doctrine of the wordes', searching out 'wherefore such doctrine is shewed by such wordes', finding out 'the agreement and difference of the doctrine from other pointes of diuinitie' and taking 'heede to all doubttes and questions'. There is a distinctly liberal note sounded when Browne allows 'Then

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R. Browne, A Treatise vpon the 23. of Mattheue (1582) printed in A. Peel and L. Carlson (eds.) The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts II (London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1953)

may we further declare the contrarie thereof, and make both of them plaine'; and his philosophy of clerical education is rounded out when he says 'But chieflie the applying must not be forgotten'.

Robert Harrison's comment that 'There is vse of other Ministers, when they may be had, for mutuall help in trying and examining, & allowinge those who they finde meete, that by their iudgement the other churches may so much the more be confirmed'¹⁰⁵ could be construed as pointing the way towards the introduction of another important strand into clerical training, namely, the acceptance of a system of moderation in which older, experienced ministers would guide junior colleagues, and advise local congregations as to the aptness of such applicants for particular appointments.

(vi) Was there any significant attempt to understand and meet the distinct educational needs of girls and women during this period?

Early modern education, as has been demonstrated, was regarded as directly vocational. The classical education available in grammar schools and universities prepared the individual for a vocation as a servant of the State or of the Church, although this philosophy was already in process of being undermined by the Protestant view of the role of education as being the opening of the Scriptures to ordinary laymen. The proper preparation of Protestant evangelists

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R. Harrison, A Little treatise Uppon the firste verse of the 122 Psalm (1583) printed in A. Peel and L. Carlson (eds.) The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts II (London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1953)

would facilitate the spread of the Reformed religion - and Christopher Haigh believes that this aim came surprisingly close to being realised:

By the middle of Elizabeth's reign there was mounting evidence from many areas of real Protestant conviction, as well as Protestant conformity ... by the 1580's, at least in the south-east, the offences of Protestant enthusiasm were more common; gadding to sermons in other parishes; private conventicles for prayer and Bible study; and hostility to popish survivals such as the sign of the cross at baptisms .. There was, at last, a Protestant Reformation.¹⁰⁶

Nevertheless, although schooling might result in members of the lower classes being better trained in economically valuable skills, in step with possible future changes in perceptions of society and its needs, education for society remained the goal of early modern educators.

For women, of course, the only 'vocation' in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was marriage, and service in the domestic sphere; but the time-lag between puberty and marriage left women with a period in which they could either work or acquire a modicum of education. Most went into domestic service; few households retained their daughters between the ages of 15 and 19, and during this period away from home they tended to perform tasks which were little more than extensions of household activity, such as housewifery or retailing. Thus girls were in effect being educated for their eventual vocation as mistresses of households; putting girls into domestic service, cloth-trade occupations or retailing was

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C. Haigh, op. cit., 278

essentially conservative in both intent and effect. Although schools were founded and maintained to communicate knowledge and skills which few of the older generation possessed, but which many believed to be important (and could to that extent be described as innovatory), no new skills had in fact been added to the list of those which a young girl must acquire. All girls could learn all they needed to know at their mother's knee. Schools to teach specific practical skills to girls owed their origins to provisions for orphans and the destitute; in such cases the school was functioning in loco parentis. Many sixteenth-century girls' schools were run in exiled communities, with both the intention and the effect of maintaining the original culture while inculcating traditional virtues. At the same time, the medieval tradition of household education continued in the homes of many of the nobility and gentry; inevitably, perhaps, a woman's domestic vocation dictated the parameters of her educational needs. The daughters of intellectuals and princes constituted the most numerous exception to this general rule; they were often the recipients of a rigorous classical education, but they were being consciously educated for public service - they set no determining pattern for their sex.

In elementary schools, boys and girls were commonly educated together, but Mulcaster argued against co-education in grammar schools.¹⁰⁷ References to school-girls in contemporary literature suggest that it was not that schools were barred to girls, but simply that education at school was not demanded for them by their

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R. Mulcaster, Positions (1581) 166-183

parents - it was not necessary for women to acquire academic learning to pursue their vocation; but in any case, families could not release daughters for a 'useless' schooling, for economic reasons. For those who nevertheless required further education for their daughters, private tuition within the home, or in the house of someone of a higher or at least identical social standing, was a generally available option.

The seventeenth-century rise of the girls' boarding school is probably best viewed as an extension of a medieval tradition. The education given at such establishments comprised religion, morals, making riddles, reading, French romances, French conversation and needlework. There is no evidence for the emergence of endowed boarding schools. Indeed, only a few girls' boarding establishments are mentioned between the 1530's and the seventeenth century - in any case, girls' boarding academies were in reality little other than social finishing schools. References to such schools occur incidentally in correspondence, diaries and autobiographies sufficiently often enough for it to be suspected that every town of any size had a girls' academy by the mid seventeenth century.

It can be confidently asserted that women guaranteed either the success or the failure of home education, for women educated the children for the first eight to ten years of their lives - it was because of this fact that John Locke declared it imperative that women should receive a better and more appropriate education; a woman must be taught such academic subjects as it was necessary

for her to communicate to her offspring.¹⁰⁸ This view was then extended by others to apply to the female school-teacher, and as a result, there was the beginning of a tendency for a few young women to receive a more academic education in order to fulfil a particular academic vocation; but the interests of the woman herself were little considered. Furthermore, more schooling for women did not mean more and wider vocational opportunities for women; they were still restricted to a private, domestic vocation. The case for a more academic education for girls rested on the assumption that well-educated women would mean well brought-up children and contented husbands - there was no concept of a vocational choice for women.

It is hard to discover how many women could read and write, and even harder to estimate how many of the literate had acquired literacy outside the home, or even in childhood. The Act of Parliament which in 1543 imposed the King's Book as the official standard in religion decreed that "No women, nor artificers, prentices, journeymen, serving men of the degrees of yeomen or under, husbandmen, nor labourers" were to read the Scriptures, on pain of a month's imprisonment, though a proviso allowed noble and gentry women to read privately.¹⁰⁹ Between 1580 and 1700, women appear to have been the most illiterate group in society, irrespective of class, if the ability to write is taken into account, but

¹⁰⁸ J. Axtell (ed.), The Educational Writings of John Locke (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1968) 354-355

¹⁰⁹ C. Haigh, op. cit., 161

there does seem to have been discrepancy between female literacy rates in town and countryside, and between London and the provinces. Nevertheless, female illiteracy was being reduced over the country as a whole, and the differential between male and female literacy rates was also falling; between 1580 and 1640, there were approximately eight literate males to every literate female.¹¹⁰

A further restriction on the education of females derived from the fact that few gentry or bourgeois parents could afford to support their daughters through indefinite spinsterhood, but a timely, brief and often minimal investment in education appeared to be an appropriate alternative in that it might either win a daughter a husband, or else provide her with a means of self-support. Moreover, it was probably less expensive to prepare a daughter for her future life, even to the extent of giving her some formal education, than it was to see a son through an apprenticeship. It is significant too, though perhaps hardly surprising, that women's expectations were conditioned by the accepted attitudes and practice of their time; many well-educated women deplored the exaltation of intellectual gifts over housewifery and motherhood, and indeed, in some cases, appear to have assumed a necessary conflict between learning and housewifery. Here, it must be stated that no incipient feminist movement may be discerned in the

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D. Cressy, "Levels of Illiteracy in England, 1530-1730" Historical Journal, 20, 1 (1977) 8; and Literacy and the Social Order (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980) 145, 147

aftermath of the prominent role which women played in early English Protestantism, despite the fact that in the years of Civil War and Interregnum many women were involved in Separatist sects, and some of them in a ministerial capacity. The general picture is intriguingly relieved by the reference to "one of the earliest of the radicals ... the prominent sectary, Katherine Chidley, whose Justification of the Independent Churches of Christ was published in 1641 ... women were now involving themselves in theological debate."¹¹¹ Where participation in a sect involved conflict with a husband, the wife had to appeal for the right to decide how she worshipped and conducted her spiritual life; but such women were apparently not intending to undermine the place of the male, who represented the interests of his wife in both church and state - only the widow and the spinster were independent. Nevertheless, Haigh adduces evidence from the 1530's that "The females of the parish took a full part in church life ... women served as wardens of the stores, and sometimes as high wardens."¹¹² Such women were not feminists seeking female emancipation, or a new role for women. They had no long-term goal. Some of them did indeed argue that women should cultivate their minds in order to escape the monotony and indignity of the existence laid down for them by society, and by this means some women might become serious scholars; but by and large, women were beginning to demonstrate an increasing interest in academic education and intellectual

¹¹¹ S. Doran and C. Durston, op. cit., 114

¹¹² C. Haigh, op. cit., 31

concerns at a time when vocational opportunities were not opening up in significantly greater variety.

Of course, it could well be the case that modern perceptions of the education of girls and women in early modern England are distorted by the fact that women were excluded from institutions which produced records. It appears to be not only difficult, but actually unwise, to attempt to reconcile inactivity and inequality in civil society with activity and equality in religious society; but equally, it appears to have been rare for women to be aware of this inconsistency, let alone to agitate for a social revolution. The education extended to women in this period was designed to fit them for those roles which men had designated as specifically theirs, and which women implicitly accepted; but the possible long-term results of expanding educational opportunities for small numbers of women should by no means be discounted. Some publications, for example, not aimed exclusively at a female readership, found a natural audience among women denied access to institutional education; and for a time, it proved possible to accommodate new developments in female education within the framework of the traditional role of women in the household. Perhaps surprisingly, Christopher Haigh plays down the impact on women of Reformation influences:

Protestantism was socially top-heavy, but not a class-based creed; its adherents were all sorts and conditions of men - but, it seems rather fewer women ... Perhaps, like the illiterate poor, women had found less to attract them in a Bible-based religion ... it appears that women were less likely than men to be convinced Protestants ... though when an Islington

meeting was discovered in 1558, the women managed to escape, leaving only men to be listed."¹¹³

There is no evidence extant of a specific Separatist position on the education of girls and women.

It emerges, then, that the assumption that it is possible to define a specifically Separatist stance on education is justified to the extent that the new Protestant Church of England was already developing a distinctive attitude to education. This attitude is first discernible in the tentative new direction taken in educating the clergy, by preparing them for a preaching and pastoral ministry, an objective which was initially common to both the official hierarchy and the Puritan enthusiasts. This was of course a value shared across the whole spectrum of devout Protestantism; but it gains steadily in strength the further the focus of attention shifts to the radical end of the spectrum. This means that the Separatists did not advance a wholly new and distinctive philosophy of education; but they did take the assumptions underlying nascent Anglican educational thinking, and develop them considerably further than the theologically-conservative and politically-inhibited state church was ever able to do. And although this judgement is made initially on the basis of the evidence for the education of the clergy, the underlying cast of mind it reveals must have extended its influence to the whole range of educational concerns, even though that range was relatively narrow in the Separatists' own time. Furthermore,

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C. Haigh, op. cit., 196-197

the fact that the Separatists did not parade a provocatively distinct educational philosophy of their own, had the effect of blunting any potential conflict with the humanist theories which had eventually made an impact of sorts in England earlier in the sixteenth century. However, Joan Simon has pointed out that this lack of conflict characterised the reaction of English educationalists as a whole, not just the Separatists, to continental humanist ideas: "Humanist theories merged with reforming ideas in the formulation of educational programmes ... The choice was ... between the humanist programme as modified under reforming influence - and Puritan ideas extended readily to advocacy of new scientific studies - and adaptations of that programme."¹¹⁴

An impressive proportion of the first Separatist leaders were university-educated men; but their extremism (in the eyes of the authorities) put them beyond the pale of acceptability at Oxford or Cambridge. On the other hand, Anglican loss of control of the universities meant that first Puritanism, then Separatism, were able to establish themselves there, and flourish, especially at Cambridge, but the later advent of theological Arminianism and ecclesiastical Laudianism resulted in the reassertion by the Church of England of its cultural dominance of the two universities. Certainly the second wave of Separatists (vide chapter 4 below), like the first wave, benefited from university education; but the people they led were firmly excluded from the same advantage, and remained so for at least another two-and-a-half centuries, solely on the grounds of

¹¹⁴
J. Simon, op. cit., 291-292

their religious ideology. Consequently,

After ... 1689, the Dissenters turned their back once and for all on Anglicanism and went on to develop the distinctive spirituality which was to play so dynamic a rôle in the revolutionary social and economic changes of the next century.¹¹⁵

CHAPTER 3**CASE STUDIES OF LEADING FIGURES - I:****THE FIRST WAVE - BROWNE, HARRISON AND BARROW**

This chapter sets out to marshal and assess such evidence as is available to answer the following questions in respect of Robert Browne, Robert Harrison and Henry Barrow, the three most prominent original leaders of the movement for definite separation from the Church of England:

- a) What were the backgrounds of, and the formative influences upon, the pioneer Separatists in early modern England?
- b) Did the Separatists merely react negatively to what they perceived as abuses, or did they go further and offer suggestions as to how things should be improved?
- c) Were the Separatists aware of the influence on their thinking of the education they themselves had received?
- d) Were the Separatists satisfied, or not, with the form, content and effect of the education available to their contemporaries?
- e) What were the Separatists' views on the education of the clergy, and what changes, if any, did they advocate to the practice which prevailed in their time?

To all intents and purposes Robert Browne, Robert Harrison and Henry Barrow select themselves as instigators of the Separatist movement in English religious history. There are records extant of chronologically earlier Dissenters from Elizabeth I's religious settlement; but it is difficult to build anything of significance on the

slight evidence which is all that has so far been discovered about such men as John Rough and Cuthbert Symson. By contrast, Browne, Harrison and Barrow left writings of their own, and are also occasionally referred to in other people's writings, thereby providing surer footings for assessments of their significance in the emergence and development of Separatism. Their impact on other people justifies regarding them as constituting the first wave of protesters against the Elizabethan religious settlement. Among the people referred to in chapter 4 below as the second wave of Separatists are some who were contemporaries of these three - Greenwood and Penry were both executed in the same year as Barrow; but they were dependent on the first three for their own thinking, and their teaching and writing, while displaying development, starts from a base which is essentially derived.

Obviously the founding fathers of English religious Nonconformity were children of their time; they were born into, and nurtured in, an educational tradition of long standing, and their own experience of education unavoidably coloured their perceptions of the concept. This is particularly true of those who were university graduates. But even though education per se was not their primary interest, enough material relating to it survives in their writings to make it possible to discern their attitudes towards it, and the value they placed upon it. Inevitably, the circumstances which occasioned those writings determined their content. They were largely retroactive responses to criticisms of the Separatists' views, polemical in tone as well as

controversial in content; so the evidence they contain is cast in the form of denials, rebuttals and contradictions of comments made by hostile establishment men, rather than clear, orderly expositions of a carefully thought-out, logical philosophy.

Robert Browne c. 1550-1633

Although Robert Browne¹ is the most prominent of the early modern English religious Separatists, he was not the first. He emerged on the scene four years after the reference to a dissenting congregation in the parish of St. Martin-in-the-Fields in 1568, but only 13 years later he disappeared from it; and although he lived on for nearly 50 years more, he had no further involvement with the pioneer Separatists. Indeed, if Peel and Carlson are to be believed, they appear to have been anxious to have no further involvement with him: "He is held to have been a pioneer in the field of religious liberty, but even those who ... accepted his views have hastened to repudiate his name, his first disciples, Barrow and Greenwood, leading the way."² Nevertheless, despite this fact, Browne has been called, without serious possibility of contradiction, "the father of English Congregationalism".

¹ A. Peel, The Brownists in Norwich and Norfolk about 1580 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1920); R. Tudur Jones, Congregationalism in England 1662-1962 (London, Independent Press Ltd., 1962) 15, 16, 17, 23, 465

² A. Peel and L. H. Carlson (eds.), The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts II (London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1953), 4

He was probably born about 1550 at Tolethorpe in Rutland, and graduated BA from Corpus Christi College in the University of Cambridge in 1572. It is known that he worked as a schoolmaster for some years in Oundle, Stamford and Bury St. Edmunds, and that in 1578 or 1579 he was with Richard Greenham at Dry Drayton, where he preached, as well as in Bene't Church in Cambridge. In 1579 he refused a bishop's licence to preach, and seems to have persuaded Robert Harrison to the same course of action. He may also have visited Middelburg in this year. In 1580, he followed Harrison to Norwich, where a Congregational Church was founded; and it was about this time that he married Alice Allen, by whom he had a large family. At Bury St. Edmunds in 1581 he was complained of by the Bishop of Norwich, and was committed to the custody of the sheriff; but he was released through the influence of his distant relative, Lord Burghley. He suffered 32 imprisonments in all, in Norfolk, Bury St. Edmunds and London. Although he wrote a letter from London in 1581 opposing the emigration of the Church at Norwich, he later went with them to Middelburg. The next year, 1582, saw the appearance of three of the works which account for his pre-eminence amongst his fellow Separatists: A Treatise of Reformation without tarrying for anie, A Treatise vpon the 23. of Matthewe and A Booke which sheweth the life and manners of all true Christians. The impact of these publications, and the alarm they aroused in the politico-religious establishment, is witnessed to by the fact that they, together with Harrison's works, were the subject of a Royal Proclamation - indeed, two sympathisers, Coppin

and Thacker, were hanged at Bury for distributing them. Dissension in the church at Middelburg in 1583 and 1584 drew from Browne his A True and Short Declaration (1584), and in the same year, he travelled to Scotland. Controversy with Presbyterians there seems to have motivated Browne's return to England, where he published his An Answer to Master Cartwright His Letter in 1585. He was imprisoned again, and on 7 October signed a form of submission to the Church of England.

Peel and Carlson comment

There are few terms, of laudation or of abuse, that have not at some time or other been applied to Robert Browne. It has been maintained, on the one hand, that he had one of the keenest minds of his day, and, on the other, that his vagaries and vacillations can be accounted for only on the supposition that he was mentally unstable - an hypothesis which appears in both contemporary and modern estimates.³

The record of the remaining 48 years of his life might suggest that both assessments could be true, on the premise that there is no such thing as normality, only points on a scale of abnormality; a keen mind, and mental instability, are both well away from the centre of a scattergram of characteristics of normality. The surviving records of Browne's life certainly suggest a stormy, even tormented, character. Within six months of making his peace with the established church, Browne was presented to the bishop of Peterborough for not coming to church (April 1586); but by

November of that year he had succeeded in securing appointment, albeit on terms, as Master of St. Olave's School, Southwark. Between 1586 and 1588 he was involved in many controversies, notably with Stephen Bredwell, author of The Rasing of the Foundations of Brownisme (1588) and his own former colleagues Barrow and Greenwood. Discharged from St. Olave's in 1588 or thereabouts, he was instituted Rector of Little Casterton in 1591, subsequently being translated to Achurch in Northamptonshire. His wife Alice died in 1610, and in 1612 he married Elizabeth Warrener, but the match turned out to be an unhappy one. There is a gap in the Achurch parish registers between 1616 and 1626; but it appears that during these years, Browne was controversial enough to occasion the instigation of various suits against himself. He is said to have had a gathered church in his house at Thorpe Waterville, and was in fact presented for non-conformity in 1629 - the embers of his youthful ardent convictions appear to have flared into flame again at the end of his long life. In 1631, he was pronounced contumacious, and was excommunicated and deprived. One small cameo from his last years throws a tantalisingly brief light on the turmoil endlessly afflicting a man who lived through times as turbulent as any recorded in early modern English history - he was jailed at Northampton at the age of 80 for having assaulted a constable. He died in jail in 1633 and was buried in St. Giles' Church in Northampton.

A salutary warning note sounded by Peel and Carlson needs to be borne in mind when attempting a reassessment of Browne's significance in the emergence and development of English religious Dissent:

Blunders continue to be made despite the researches in the present century of Ives Cater⁴, T.G. Crippen⁵, and F.J. Powicke⁶, and especially of Mr. Champlin

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- ⁴ Ives Cater, "Robert Browne's Ancestors and Descendants", Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society (hereinafter Trans. C.H.S.) II, No. 3 (September 1905) 151-159;
 "New Facts Relating to Robert Browne" Trans. C.H.S. II, No. 4 (January 1906), 235-246;
 "Robert Browne and the Achurch Parish Register" Trans. C.H.S. III, No. 2 (May 1907) 126-136;
 "The Later Years of Robert Browne" Trans. C.H.S., III, No. 5 (May 1908) 303-316;
 "The Excommunication of Robert Browne and His Will" Trans. C.H.S. V, No. 4 (January 1912) 199-204
- ⁵ T.G. Crippen, A Catalogue of the Congregational Library, Memorial Hall, Faringdon Street, London E.C. (1895);
 "Early Nonconformist Bibliography" Trans. C.H.S. I, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6; II, Nos. 1, 3, 6 (April 1901 - October 1906);
 "Bibliography of Congregational Church History", Trans. C.H.S. II, Nos. 2 (May 1905) and 5 (May 1906);
 "The Brownists in Amsterdam" Trans. C.H.S. II, No. 3 (September 1905) 160-172;
 "The Morrice Manuscripts in Williams's Library" Trans. C.H.S. IV, No. 5 (May 1910) 294-298;
 "Anti-Brownist Pamphlets, 1641-42" Trans. C.H.S. V, No. 2 (May 1911) 83-91
- ⁶ F.J. Powicke, "Lists of the Early Separatists" Trans. C.H.S. I, No. 3 (July 1902) 141-158;
Robert Browne, Pioneer of Modern Congregationalism (London, Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1910);
 "English Congregationalism In Its Greatness and Decline 1592-1770" in A. Peel (ed.), Essays Congregational and Catholic Issued in Commemoration of the Centenary of the Congregational Union of England and Wales (London, Independent Press Ltd., 1931)

Burrage⁷. All these correct their predecessors, and sometimes correct themselves ... Dexter's careful appraisal⁸ and the ... biographies of Dr. Powicke, Mr. Burrage and Dr. Dwight Smith⁹ should be read by those who think it justifiable to regard him as hypocrite, deceiver, and time-server. And dogmatism must at all costs be eschewed, for if it is impossible to pierce the gloom and discover what his outward practice was in the second half of his life, what must be the darkness which surrounds his inward convictions? ... it should not be forgotten that all the writings extant belong to a single decade in the life of one who became an octogenarian. It has to be remembered, too, that many of them, even in that decade, are known to us only in part and through quotation by opponents: most of these never reached

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C. Burrage, A New Year's Gift (London, Congregational Historical Society, 1904);
The Church Covenant Idea - Its Origin and Its Development (Philadelphia, American Baptist Publication Society, 1904);
The True Story of Robert Browne 1550-1633, Father of Congregationalism... (London, Henry Frowde, 1906);
 "The 'Retractation' of Robert Browne, Father of Congregationalism, Being A Reproofe of Certain Schismatical Persons [i.e., Henry Barrowe, John Greenwood and their Congregation] and their Doctrine Touching the Hearing and Preaching of the Word of God" (Oxford and London, 1907). Printed in A. Peel and L.H. Carlson (eds.), Cartwrightiana Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts I (London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1950) 201-261 (N.B. Either R. Browne or T. Cartwright is the author).
The Early English Dissenters in the Light of Recent Research (1550-1641) 2 vols. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1912)

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H.M. Dexter, "Dr. Waddington's Congregational History" Congregational Quarterly, (July 1874);
The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years as seen in its Literature (New York, Harper and Bros., 1880);
 "Elder Brewster's Library" Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Second Series V, (1888-89) 37-85;
 H.M. Dexter and M. Dexter, The England and Holland of the Pilgrims (Boston, Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1905)

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D.C. Smith, "Robert Browne, Independent" Church History VI, (December 1937)

the medium of print.¹⁰

The caveat applies as much to his views on education as to the other areas of his thought and writing. It is, however, not in doubt that Browne himself enjoyed the advantage of the best education the age could provide. He was born into a good family, with connections at the highest levels of Elizabethan society - connections he did not scruple to utilise on more than one occasion, to his personal benefit; and his family were able to secure a place for him at the University of Cambridge, and to bear all the costs of maintaining him there. Despite the fact that Cambridge was the focal point of Puritan intellectual activity throughout the period under review, "the former dominance of the medieval church, the ideology of the Reformation, the reaction to it, and the national efforts to achieve a solution"¹¹ must be borne in mind when analysing the writings of Browne and his fellow religious radicals. They were inevitably susceptible to the influence of the thought of preceding centuries; so it is imperative to enter into their minds as far as possible, to see through their eyes, to understand with their concepts and to be aware of the intellectual baggage they inherited and used as they thought their way through the problems and challenges of their times, and worked out their own positions on the topics which engrossed their attention. Thus H. Foreman, for example, is justified in pointing out that opinions on

¹⁰ A. Peel and L.H. Carlson, op. cit., 4-5

¹¹ Ibid., 9

the matter of education of the clergy were divided, with some of the Separatists advocating a university education for them, and others, amongst whom were Robert Browne, opposing it.¹² Browne disapproved of it because of the nature of the university education currently undergone by intending clergy, and because of the use to which they subsequently put it. He was very scornful of those, probably the majority, who did their best to utilise the education they had been privileged to receive in the interest of their own self-advancement, rather than for the edification of their flocks. Browne does however appear to have been sympathetic to secular education - a point which will be taken up later.

His A Treatise vpon the 23. of Mattheue (1582) is certainly a strong base from which to launch an attack upon religious leaders - it contains some of the strongest language attributed to Jesus in any of the Gospels, as He warns His contemporaries against the shortcomings of the religious leaders of His own time ("Do what they tell you; pay attention to their words. But do not follow their practice; for they say one thing and do another.")¹³ Peel and Carlson comment that although the work is ostensibly

a discussion of how to handle the Scriptures in preaching ... [it] is more a denunciation of current preaching, which is akin to that of the scribes and pharisees, and a plea for the kind of speaking

¹² H. Foreman, "Robert Browne and Education" Baptist Quarterly XXX, 1, (January 1983) 4-14

¹³ The Gospel According to Matthew, chapter 23, verse 3 (New English Bible, Oxford and Cambridge, 1961)

exemplified by Jesus, Who spoke as One having authority. Written in a vigorous style, this work is scarcely less trenchant than the Marprelate Tracts.¹⁴

Browne strongly attacked the widespread tendency among the Anglican clergy of his day to use their learning to enhance their own reputations, regardless of the needs of their congregations. He condemns their preaching as being wrongly motivated. Too many of their sermons consisted of little more than an ostentatious vaunting of their knowledge of Hebrew, Greek and Latin. When Cambridge graduates stood in the pulpits, resplendent in their scarlet gowns and hoods, pride shone forth. "They preach for the sake of preferment. They seek to display their own learning" - whereas Browne insisted that it was instruction in practical Christianity which was required, not displays of academic knowledge. He even went so far as to declare that learning can be detrimental to the Christian education of the people. His criticism appears to have been directed at the use of Latin and Greek in preaching. He was astute enough to foresee that his opponents would seize on his own tenet of justification from Scripture for every church practice, by quoting the speaking in other tongues described in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. His defence to this objection was that speaking in tongues was essential for the spread of the Gospel in its earliest days, but that the contemporary clergy were using Latin in the pulpit when there was no need for it, purely for their own self-satisfaction, and to

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A. Peel and L.H. Carlson, op. cit., 17

keep the ordinary people in awe of them.

Their Latin is phisik to make hole the sick, and their greeke and hebrewe will bless you from evill spirites ... This phisike will heale all Paules Cross in one day. For so soone as they have shewed it and receyved a Dinner, and their honour and the hope of some preferment: all is made whole, and they goe away as if no bodie were sicke.¹⁵

It is of course possible to contend that Browne was not so much attacking learning, as warning against its abuse; but Foreman's comment that "although he waxes eloquent in the denunciation of such education he has very little to offer in the way of constructive criticism"¹⁶ reflects the more likely conclusion that his attack on the university training given to intending clergy may stem from his own dissatisfaction with the training he had himself received. Browne's view on this topic highlights one of the areas in which he and the Separatists who came after him differed from the Puritans who remained in the established church; the standard Anglican position was that the true vocation of the clergy was to use learning for the edification and benefit of all.

Browne's deep suspicion of mere head-knowledge is further illustrated by his attitude to logic and rhetoric, two major features of the university education given in his time to intending candidates for the ministry. It might be supposed that he would have judged

¹⁵ R. Browne, A Treatise Vpon the 23 of Matthewe (1582) D3 recto

¹⁶ H. Foreman, op. cit. (1983)

them to be of great value to men whose task was to be to win others to the faith, since logic was aimed at providing training in precise and relevant thinking, and rhetoric was designed to enable this thinking to be conveyed persuasively. But Browne displays commendable consistency in bringing the issue of the value and use of logic and rhetoric to the touchstone of his foundation conviction of the supremacy of Scripture as the sole authority in all matters of faith and life. He dismisses both disciplines, not in toto, but for the (to him) supreme purpose of understanding and interpreting the Scriptures. He may be criticised here for using the Scriptures to set up those self-same Scriptures as the ultimate seat of authority and court of appeal; but perhaps this philosophical inconsistency is more apparent than real. Be that as it may, he justifies his denigration of the value of logic in the training of clergymen by appealing to the Apostle Paul, who wrote to the church at Colossae "Be on your guard; do not let your minds be captured by hollow and delusive speculations, based on traditions of man-made teaching".¹⁷ Browne's suspicion of logic was deepened by his conviction that "philosophy and vain deceit" were tools used by heretics and enemies of true Christianity -

By that [i.e., logic] have all heretickes and all the broode of Antichrist both troubled and spoiled us; for by it is the exercise of prophecie or mutuall edifyinge, also the right use of Synods or generall meetinges, of determining controversies, of discussing matters of communinge, disputing, and searching out the truth,

¹⁷

The Letter of Paul to the Colossians, chapter 2, verse 8 (New English Bible, Oxford and Cambridge, 1961)

cleane taken away. By that also the people which have not learned logicke, are shutt out and discouraged from talking, pleading, and mutuall edifying in the church meetinges.¹⁸

It is possible to argue from these comments that Browne considered education to be elitist and divisive, and therefore directly inimical to the eirenical and supportive atmosphere of the gathered church, which was certainly the ideal proclaimed by its first proponents.

Browne further declared that the use of logic resulted in disputations and the "chopping and cutting of one another in vaine babblings, brawlinges, and strife of wordes". To the objection that Jesus and Paul both employed disputation as a pedagogical method, Browne asks if they used logic (as understood, of course, in the context in which he was employing the term). He raises the question as to whether or not Jesus had "suche Logicke and when he hered and posed the Doctours, did he shew anie such skill?" Still aware of the danger of having his argument destroyed by the application of his own principles, he pursues his case with the comment that when Paul exhorted Timothy to keep the truth which he had taught him, he could not be referring to anything other than the dangers of logic, because the Apostle gave strict instructions to avoid disputations which were of no profit to anyone, but tended to lead those listening away from the truth - "stop disputing about

¹⁸

R. Browne, op. cit., D3 recto - D3 verso

mere words; it does no good, and is the ruin of those who listen".¹⁹ Indeed, Browne insists that pace such authorities as the Ancient Fathers, Calvin and Beza, whom he mentions but does not quote, logic was precisely what Paul was referring to in these instances.

When the Syllogisme cometh, then cometh babbling and contention: for the leafe will shake with the winde, and churlish words are sone moved, by such boisterous reasonings. Thoughe you warne such disputers to beware of heat in disputinge, yet they are sooner in the fire, then you can tell howse it kindled. If the serpent bite when it is not charmed no better are such babblers.²⁰

Foreman's judgement is that "Logic, as far as Browne was concerned, was not conducive to a good Christian attitude, that is, its use would bring not harmony but strife".²¹

It is a measure of the keenness of Browne's intellect that he was not content with mere denunciations of what he thought was a pernicious characteristic of clerical education in his day. He sought to go deeper by trying to demolish the case for the necessity of logic in order to understand the issue of cause and effect.

When a Cause is given, must it be written up for Logicke? If a man shew an Effecte, could he no where fetch it but from their Logicke Tables? Is

¹⁹ The Second Letter of Paul to Timothy, chapter 2, verse 14 (New English Bible, Oxford and Cambridge, 1961). It needs to be borne in mind that 16th century exegetes may not have been aware that Paul was referring to the speculations of Gnosticism when he made such exhortations.

²⁰ R. Browne, op. cit., (1582b) D4 verso

²¹ H. Foreman, op. cit. (1983)

Logicke the Trumpet of Gods workes, for they are all effectes: or doth it shew his power and holines, as the causes thereof. Who is ignorant that there are Causes? And will Logicke cause us to know the Causes, or can we sett the face thereof, or the eyes to looke them out for us?²²

Again, it may be felt that Browne is better at asking questions than providing answers to them; and perhaps the effectiveness of his case against education in general is in direct proportion to the extent to which he was himself an educated person.

Browne was also opposed to logic because he was convinced that, as practised in his day, it was "the possession of a privileged class, seeking to retain power in its hands, a principle diametrically opposed ... to the democratic nature of the 'gathered church'"²³ (although it is misleading to use the word 'democratic' to describe the defining principle of the gathered church; that is perhaps best done by coining the term 'Christocratic'). Browne seems to have felt strongly that the teaching of logic ran counter to one of the principal aims of the Reformers, namely, the abolition of the distinction between priest and people. He cited in support of his view the fact that the terms used in logic were all in Latin, thus putting them beyond the comprehension of ordinary people. As a consequence, logical disputation appeared to be an activity available only to a privileged elite. His contention cannot, however, be used against him as proof of a disdainful view of the mass of common

²² R. Browne, op. cit., (1582b) D4 verso

²³ H. Foreman, op. cit., (1983) 7

people; on the contrary, his belief that they could understand and appreciate the principles of logic if they were given a chance to, demonstrates that he avoided falling into the trap of underestimating the intellectual capacity of 'ordinary' people. The effectiveness of his presentation of his case is, as Foreman points out, heightened by a controlled dash of irony -

Some things agree, say they, and partake together: if you call not this a secrete, they will byte you or prepare themselves to battle. Some things also differ and can not well be joyned, as to saye, a good man is naught. To learne so harde a lesson is worth a Cambridge degree. When things doo differ, as being of another kinde, you must call them 'Disparates', that is in English, the sortes of thinges which are sundrie, but you marre the game if you name not their owne worde, 'Disparates'. You take away their wisdom, if you speak so playne English.²⁴

Browne was not surprisingly scornful of those who argued that until they had mastered logic they were not qualified to study the Scriptures; he castigated people who used logic as being blind and foolish. Rhetoric, and logicians' Methods and Divisions, similarly attracted his strictures. He insisted that the way of salvation is to be found only in the Bible, and not through logic, since the Scriptures are sufficient to meet all the believer's needs - he requires no other helps.

Browne's criticism of clerical education was of course by no means unique. The dominance of Zwingli at Zurich had already resulted in the displacement of logical disputation and discourse by exercises

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R. Browne, op. cit., (1582b) D4 - E1 recto

in biblical study as the principal discipline for the training of would-be ministers; and Zwingli's ideas could have been mediated to him by Mennonites whom he would have been very likely to have met on a visit to Holland in 1579. But although allowance is traditionally, and rightly, made for the fact that commercial intercourse between English merchants and their counterparts in northern Europe was a significant factor in the transmission of early Protestant ideas to this country, continental influences do not appear to have played a major part in the genesis and evolution of English Separatism. Indeed, because of the pressure of persecution at home, resulting in several movements of refugees into exile in the Netherlands, influences, such as they were, are more likely to have operated in the reverse direction. Separatism appears to have been a particularly English phenomenon; it seems to have exerted little, if any, appeal in the other countries which embraced the Reformation. There, the synodical form of church government, deriving from the theory of Calvin put into practice by the church in Geneva, took root and flourished. It is fascinating, though beyond the scope of this study, to speculate on why Presbyterianism succeeded in establishing itself in the neighbouring kingdom of Scotland, but not south of the border; but the fact remains that although continental ideas influenced doctrine, they made less impact on church government, and little, if any, on English Separatists' thinking about education.

Browne's observations on educational matters are validated by the fact that he practised the profession of teaching, perhaps for as much as seven years, and, in his own opinion, enjoyed some success in it. He seems to have been as concerned with the state of the religious life of England as John Penry was with that of Wales. "Nether the parents could long rejoyse in their children, nor the children profit so much in religion, as that other studies and learning might be blessed thereby." But his commendable attempts to put things right brought him to the unsympathetic notice of the authorities - he was "discharged of his schole by the grudge of his enimies". His own comment was

Whatsoever thinges he ffound belonging to the church and to his calling as a member off the church, he did put it in practis. For even little children are off the church and kingdom off God yea off such saith Christ, doth his kingdom consist: and therefore both in his schole he laboured that the kingdom off God might appeare, and also in those of the towne with whom he kept companie.²⁵

Browne's disingenuous religious radicalism could hardly fail to enrage establishment men whose livelihoods, and perhaps even their very lives, depended on their success in imposing Elizabeth I's state church on the whole nation in the interest of political unity and stability.

Browne's A Booke which sheweth the life and manners of All true Christians and howe unlike they are unto Turkes and Papistes and

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R. Browne, A True and Short Declaration (1584) A1 recto, A1 verso

Heathen Folk (1582) contains comments on education in wider but more general terms. The fact that the book has separate sections on parents, children, teachers, and studies, suggests that Browne thought highly of education, and was anxious that it should be well regulated. In an age when the subordination of children to parental authority was deemed to be axiomatic, Browne's declared conviction that relationships between parents and children, and between teachers and scholars, are actually based upon agreements, appears to be startlingly progressive. The relationship between parents and children he describes as being "of naturall desert and dutie betweene them". Parents are authorised to rule over their children "by naturall desert of begetting them and bringing them up". Between teacher and pupil "there must be triall and judgement of each others meetnes for their likinge and callinge ... also there must be a due covenant between them". This concept is both broad in scope and far-reaching in perceptiveness; but it raises questions of which Browne was either unaware, or to which he was not able to supply answers. Is this supposed covenant a formal commitment, with legal weight, carrying penalties for misfeasance? Or is it subconscious, accepted as being on a par with such instincts as the meeting of needs? Whatever its basis and nature, Browne regards it as bestowing on the teacher his authority over the pupil, and entitling him "to have maintenance or benefitte" by his pupil in return for the learning he imparts to him.²⁶

²⁶

Ibid., K1 recto - K3 verso

Browne seems not to have realised how forward-looking was his doctrine of a covenant between children and adults; cultural conditions had not evolved to the point where either he or his readers could appreciate the implications of the idea. This assumption is strengthened by the fact that in other respects his educational thinking is entirely conventional - specifically, in his acceptance that a good education was primarily a religious education. Children must be taught "the groundes of religioun" and the meaning of the Scriptures. "The groundes of religion" are for Browne "the pronounced, written or knowne lawes and doctrine of God", which provide the essential truths of Christianity. "No further details of these laws are given but we can safely assume that Browne meant by this only those laws and rules which could be found in Scripture".²⁷ At first sight this statement appears to be comprehensive and conclusive; but it does raise a number of questions demanding answers. On whom for example, is laid the obligation to 'find' these 'laws and rules' in Scripture - the clergy, or the laity? If the latter, as would be more likely in the religiously radical milieu of the Separatists, then Browne's educational philosophy must entail the means to this end - i.e., at the very least, a high level of literacy among all the members of the gathered church.

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H. Foreman, op. cit., (1983) 10

But although Browne gave first place to a sound religious (i.e., according to his understanding, Christian, i.e., Protestant) education, he did not ignore the wider aspects of education. Referring to the secular sphere, he asks "How are we to gett and increase thinges?" and he answers his own question with the comment "By our callinges in studies of learning. By workes of bodie in sciences and craftes". This suggests that Browne appreciated that education not only could, but should, have a practical application. He defines "studies of learning" as exercises to provide the mind with knowledge and wisdom "the better to governe and reforme us in all duties", and trades and sciences as "manual crafts and skills by which to make or do somewhat for living and maintenance". Studies and trades, in his thinking, are both means to the ultimate end of rendering service to God by obeying Him and thereby coming to know Him.²⁸ This was a standard Reformed view at the time, expressed by Calvin, Bullinger and, through the latter, Zwingli; but Foreman declines to characterise their influence on Browne as decisive - "All that we can do is to note it and to acknowledge the possibility of its having helped shape Browne's attitudes".²⁹

On 15 April 1590, Browne wrote a letter to his distant relative Lord Burghley, Elizabeth I's Lord High Treasurer. The letter is both

²⁸ R. Browne, A Booke which sheweth the life and manners of all true Christians (1582) O2 recto

²⁹ H. Foreman, op. cit., (1983) 11

fascinating and important because of the further insight it provides into Browne's thinking on education. It reveals both his love of learning, and his desire to reform it. He declares it as his ideal that "in one yeare schollers may well learne together those arts, which scarcely in ten yeares they untowardly learne in the universities". The comment is a hard-hitting criticism of the sterility and ineffectiveness of much of what passed for education in Browne's own time; but unfortunately, he specifies neither the content nor the form of the reformation he would like to see implemented. However, he clearly suffered from no uncertainties as to his own capabilities in the matter - he asserts that if he "were authorised to read publique lectures and make profession according", he would bring many thousands of people to his point of view, and so improve their studies.

Plato, Aristotle, Sokrates and Pythagoras made manie thousands schollers, and that without anie publique maintenance and charge, and in verie few yeares...so much rather in the arts and points of religion more truelie handled, and utterly differing from them all, I would hope by your Lordships good countenance onely to performe much rather the like.³⁰

Among the more recent of commentators on Browne, the view has been advanced that his theme is essentially utilitarian. Foreman notes that Browne was a contemporary of Francis Bacon (1561-1626), amongst other things, one of the pioneers of seventeenth-

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R. Browne, "Letter to Lord Burghley, 15 April 1590" in A. Peel and L.H. Carlson (eds.), The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne, Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts II (London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1953) 530-531

century educational thought. Bacon, whose influence was dominant in this period, developed a concept of education which could be characterised as utilitarian in that he advocated better training in 'modern' subjects such as history, modern languages and politics. He made plain his dislike of the rigid classical curriculum and, a point which would have warmed the cockles of Browne's heart, he believed that logic and rhetoric should not be studied in the early part of a student's course.³¹ Browne wrote about 20 years before Bacon did - could his work have exercised some influence on his better-known contemporary? It is at least possible that there is a reference to Browne's writings on the education of the clergy in Bacon's The Advancement of Learning; referring to those who discredit learning, Bacon comments on

the zeal and jealousy of divines who argue that knowledge hath in it somewhat of the Serpent, and therefore where it entereth into a man it makes him swell...experience demonstrates how learned men have been arch-heretics...and how the contemplation of second causes doth derogate from our dependence upon God, who is the first cause.³²

These sentiments, together with an attempt to construe Paul's injunction against being "seduced by vain philosophy" as not an attack upon learning, but a definition of the limitations of human knowledge, can certainly be found in Browne's work as well. Once

³¹ R. Greaves, The Puritan Revolution and Educational Thought (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1969) 20

³² F. Bacon, The Advancement of Learning (ed. W.A. Wright, Oxford, 1868) I, 1

again, (though issue could be taken with him), Foreman counsels caution -

We must be wary, however, of exaggerating the possible link between Bacon and Browne (and other early Separatists who also wrote on education) but it does seem reasonable to see the latter as contributing to a stream of educational thought of which Bacon was the greatest exponent.³³

This opinion may be over-cautious because the trend in current historical research is to move away from the previous tendency to minimise the skills, achievements and significance of past generations. The understandable desire to avoid misleading over-estimates of people with far fewer technological resources than modern man has, may have led to over-correction, and consequent unwitting injustice to the objects of historians' research. In accordance with this contention, sufficient weight must be attached to Browne's own level of education (he was a graduate of the University of Cambridge), to his social connections (he was related to Lord Burghley, one of Elizabeth I's chief ministers of state), to his not inconsiderable literary output (19 pieces of varying length, from letters to books, are either extant or known of by reference to them in other people's writings), to his status as a published author, and to his skill in expressing himself (even though this almost always brought him into conflict with the authorities). The weight of probability must mean that the combined effect of all these factors justifies the judgement that Browne may have

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H. Foreman, op. cit., (1983) 12

exercised a greater influence on contemporary educational thinking and writing than has been realised. The fact that he was a Dissenting voice in the area of religion, which was of supreme sensitivity in his time, might have resulted in other thinkers and writers paying greater attention to what he said and wrote, with the consequence that his ideas would have been more widely known than would otherwise have been the case. It is quite possible that they could have influenced the thought of even such a leading light as Francis Bacon.

Although Browne advocated a reformation both of institutions and curricula for the education of the clergy, he did not go into detail in either of these areas. Foreman's conclusion is really quite limp, in line with his unwillingness to attribute any significant importance to Browne's contribution to the formulation of a specific Separatist position on education: "Perhaps the real significance of his views is that in their expression of dissatisfaction with the learned clergy and their learning, Browne was preparing the ground for future controversy within Separatist ... ranks over the question of the necessity, or even desirability, of an educated ministry."³⁴ This is little better than an unworthy belittling of the contribution of a pioneer to the creation of a mind-set which was obviously elaborated and developed as it was probed and pondered on. The foundations laid by Robert Browne and his fellow early Separatist thinkers and writers facilitated the construction of much more

impressive superstructures in later centuries than would have been possible if the minimalist interpretations of some commentators were entirely true.

Equally, however, care must be taken to guard against going too far in the opposite direction. A fair assessment must obviously take into account Browne's weaknesses; and in all conscience, these are not easy to ignore. His own Cambridge education did not, unfortunately, save him from misusing Scripture. Although his frequent marginal references to particular Bible verses reveal a detailed knowledge of both the Old and New Testaments, his scriptural proofs occasionally do not prove, and texts wrested from their contexts sometimes appear to the impartial reader to be mere pretexts.

Sometimes Browne uses a text as a springboard, and where he will come up is anyone's guess ... Some of his specious arguments could be interpreted as sophisms. An example of Browne's reasoning may be seen in the following syllogism: 'Major premise: Every plant which the Heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up. Minor premise: The English parish churches have not been planted by our Heavenly Father. Therefore they shall be rooted up.'³⁵

But such criticism, though valid, is merely pedantic, and runs the real risk of detracting from Browne's solid achievements. It is only fair to him to keep firmly in mind the main intention and thrust of his protest, namely, the freeing of the Gospel from what he perceived to be the choking grip of ecclesiastical traditionalism. We

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A. Peel and L.H. Carlson, op. cit., (1953) 22-23

come back to the heart of his concerns with a further look at his criticism of the communication of that Gospel. The stringency of his judgement reveals just how far practice in his time had fallen from the high ideals of the New Testament. For Browne, the most important means of communicating the Gospel was the preaching of the Word. Here again, he is trenchant in his remarks about the undue interjection of logic into the sermon, which he regarded as one of the gravest obstacles to the understanding by ordinary people of what they should be receiving by means of the sermon. It is important to bear in mind that he had not conceived a blind, unreasoning hostility to logic; logic per se is good, but the light of Scripture is better. "Graduates of Cambridge are so enamoured with logic that they consider it a heavenly art"; in fact, they abuse and misuse it. Browne scorned the use of the syllogism in preaching, and made his point with some shrewd thrusts: Job was an expert at disputation, but his proofs did not "walk upon a Major and a Minor". Paul warned against vain philosophy; Peel and Carlson paraphrase Browne's position thus:

true preaching produces goodness and wisdom, prevents ungodliness and folly, but modern sixteenth century preaching displays disparates, kinds, sorts, species, genus, consentanie, dissentanie, differences, divisions, definitions, agreements, predicables and predicaments. Essentially, Browne's indictment of logic is that preachers have made it an end in itself - 'but now their logic has held them so long in learning what they should do, that they have done little or nothing at all'.³⁶

³⁶

Ibid., 18

Browne's contempt for the kind of learning acquired at Cambridge is underscored by his insistence that there is too much emphasis on pseudo-terminology and mere vocabulary. He was adamant that students should acquire a knowledge of the Bible, of theology, of literature, science, and true philosophy, instead of baffling technical jargon. He insisted that content should be stressed more than form, creativity more than analysis, substance more than shadow. A small but enlightening glimpse of the extent and depth of his own education is afforded by his observation that after the common-sense and wisdom of the Apostolic century, there was a falling-away from pristine purity in the Ante-Nicene period.

The early fathers spun out attenuated webs of logic, rhetoric and nonsense. From the Post-Nicene fathers, such as Jerome, Ambrose and Augustine, there proceeded vile errors, philosophical delusions and profane fables. But the worst of all was that monstrous heretic of the third century, that 'logically and rhetorically mocker' - Origen.³⁷

The impression that Browne was predominantly negative in his attitude and approach is perhaps the inevitable fate of any-one cast like him in the role of the radical attacking entrenched traditions and vested interests; the inadequacy of the existing has to be demonstrated before the appeal of the innovatory can be established. It is therefore important, before concluding this study of Robert Browne's educational thought and writings, to look at one of his more positive achievements. His A Booke which sheweth

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Ibid., 18-19

the life and manners of all true Christians (1582) is of interest not only because of its contents, but also because of its layout. The left-hand pages are designed for the general reader, and the right-hand ones for the learned student, which indicates that Browne was aware of the existence of different levels of educational attainment, and, better still, a readiness to accommodate them. In the right-hand pages Browne seems to be trying to beat the scholars at their own game; these pages contain definitions and divisions (it is essential to appreciate that it was only their appearance in public sermons that called forth Browne's ire, noted above). He freely acknowledges that he had taken great pains to anticipate the objections of the "scholars who like deepness, the logicians who are sticklers for syllogistical reasoning and formal demonstrations, the forward and sophistical divines, those peevish troublers who insist on definitions, divisions, axioms and proofs - all those perverse individuals who resist the truth."³⁸

As far as Robert Browne is concerned, then, it appears that:

- (a) His decidedly patrician background, and the aristocratic influences which are highly likely to have played upon him in his formative years, do not seem to have inhibited the development of an initially robust independence of spirit and a radical turn of mind.
- (b) The dominant impression given by the surviving evidence is of vigorous and usually well-founded criticism of late Tudor

Anglicanism rather than of specifically positive suggestions as to how it could be improved.

- (c) A detailed picture emerges from his writings of the education he had received at Cambridge; but Browne betrays little awareness of the extent to which he had been conditioned by it.
- (d) Nevertheless, he expresses forthright criticism of the form, content and influence of the university education available to his contemporaries.
- (e) He asserts that clerical education does not need, indeed, it may be positively hampered by, the pseudo-scholastic training which was all that was on offer at both Cambridge and Oxford in his day. What was imperative was a sound knowledge of Scripture, and the inculcation of techniques which would enable intending clergymen "rightly to divide the word of truth", to the spiritual benefit of their congregations.

Robert Harrison ? - c. 1585

If the challenge to the student of Browne's thought lies in the complexity of his character, and the consequent convolutions in his ideas and writings, the challenge posed by a study of Robert Harrison³⁹ derives mainly from the paucity of information about the man himself. The dates of his birth and death are both uncertain, though it is possible that he died in or around 1585; even his first

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R. Tudur Jones, op. cit., 15, 16, 17

name is occasionally wrongly given as Richard. It is however clear that he was active between 1572 and 1584. His writings were not extensive, and Peel and Carlson⁴⁰ characterise them as not profound; but they are significant as being typical of the challenge of Elizabethan Separatists to ecclesiastical authoritarianism. The challenge was a response to the establishment of a state church which, it was confidently expected, would be able to deal effectively with Dissent; but when an exasperated establishment was driven to the ultimate sanction of execution, as it was in the cases of Barrow, Greenwood and Penry, it may be felt that the effectiveness lay with the oppressed rather than their oppressors. Be that as it may, the concept of a state church necessarily entailed embracing Erastianism. Peel and Carlson's judgement that this was understandable may be questioned; in fact their own comment that it was illogical "to exchange a spiritual taskmaster for a civil magistrate did not make sense. What safety was there if religious pilots avoided the shoals of a papal Scylla only to run aground on a secular Charybdis?"⁴¹ neatly encapsulates the reason for questioning the understandability of Anglican Erastianism.

Harrison was probably a native of Norfolk - what little evidence there is connects him almost exclusively with that county after his university days, apart from time he spent in Middelburg. He matriculated as a pensioner in St. John's College Cambridge in

⁴⁰ A. Peel and L.H. Carlson, op. cit., (1953) 8

⁴¹ Idem

1564, but then transferred to Corpus Christi College; he graduated BA in 1567 and MA in 1572. Virtually nothing else is known of him other than what can be gleaned from his own writings, from Robert Browne's A True and Short Declaration (1584) and from Stephen Bredwell's The Rasing of the Foundations of Brownisme (1588). In 1572 he published a translation of Lavater's Of ghostes and spirites walking by nyght; the next year he married, at Aylsham, and from 1573 to 1574 he was Master of Aylsham Grammar School. However, he was deprived for nonconformity and may then have revisited Cambridge. He emerges again in 1580 as Master of the Old Men's Hospital in Norwich, where he was joined by Robert Browne; a Congregational Church was formed there at this time. Persecution broke out immediately, and Harrison was probably imprisoned. It was at this time that he wrote A Treatise of the Church and Kingdome of Christ, but it was not published. In 1581, he emigrated with the congregation of the Church to Middelburg, and in 1582 he helped to finance the publication of Browne's books in Middelburg. His own works A Little Treatise upon the first Verse of the 122 Psalm and Three Formes of Catechismes were published in 1583; and between 1581 and 1583 he suffered the deaths of his children in Middelburg. In 1583, Elizabeth I's proclamation against the books of Browne and Harrison was published abroad; the seriousness of the threat to the Separatists was underlined by the execution of Coppin and Thacker at Bury St. Edmunds for disseminating the books, 40 copies of which were burned. The same year saw dissension in the

congregation, and the outbreak of a quarrel between Browne and Harrison - the latter became leader of the congregation when Browne sailed for Scotland. Harrison initiated attempts to unite the church with the congregation of English merchants which had as its minister Thomas Cartwright, the Presbyterian; it is known that in 1584 he wrote a letter to Cartwright, which has not survived. Cartwright's reply to it was printed by Browne, who also published An Answere to Master Cartwright His Letter, probably in 1585; it is likely that the Answere was written, as well as published, by Browne, because of Harrison's death at that time. Peel and Carlson do not allow the attribution to Harrison by the Dictionary of National Biography of A Booke of the Forme of Common Prayers, Administration of the Sacraments: &c. agreeable to God's Worde, and the use of the reformed churches on the grounds of lack of positive evidence, and also the inherent unlikelihood of Harrison having had anything to do with a work of this kind. They do however remark that

A perusal of the works ... suggests that Harrison was a considerable figure who might have played a prominent part in the history of Nonconformity but for his untimely death. The Catechisms, like many of those published by his contemporaries, are wooden, but there is liveliness about much of his controversial writing, and here and there a striking phrase catches the attention - 'wishers and woulders', 'sleep on both ears', etc.⁴²

⁴²

Ibid., 3

Harrison's early death must be the single most significant justification for the judgement that his writings are neither extensive nor profound. They are, however, in the first rank of importance as being wholly characteristic of the temper and outlook of the first early modern English Separatists. They reflect the challenge to ecclesiastical authoritarianism which had been so strongly nurtured by persecution in Mary I's reign; and they betray concern over the outcome of the struggles of William the Silent and the Dutch against the Duke of Alva and the Spaniards. They are the product of a man who, in common with his co-religionists, followed anxiously the ebb and flow of the Wars of Religion in France, and shuddered apprehensively at the news of the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre in Paris. They reveal alarm at the growing power of Catholic Spain, and Philip II's fixed determination to extirpate the heresy of the Reformation.

Although firm facts about Robert Harrison are few and far between, certain conclusions may reasonably be inferred from the little that is known about him.

- a) His presence in the 1560's at both St. John's and Corpus Christi Colleges, Cambridge, must imply origination from a family of appropriate standing to secure him a place at the university, and sufficient means to support him there, perhaps continuously for a period as long as eight years. He was also considered to be of appropriate social standing for appointment, first as Master of a Grammar School, and then

of an Old Men's Hospital. The very first influences on him, i.e., those of home and school (if he went to one), are surely likely to have been conformist; but the University of Cambridge was an early centre of Puritan ideology, and Harrison is most unlikely to have been out of his teens before he came under its influence. Perhaps it was the force of Robert Browne's character which drew him on from Puritanism to Separatism, though the very volatility of that same character meant that agreement did not last for long.

- b) It is, however, to Harrison's credit that he did not merely react negatively to what he became convinced was unacceptable in the state-imposed settlement of religion in England. His A Treatise of the Church and the Kingdome of Christ sets out his positive views as to the nature and constitution of Christian churches, views which he lost no time in putting into practice, first at Norwich, and then at Middelburg in the Netherlands.
- c) The small extant corpus of Harrison's writings does not give any clear indication as to whether or not he was particularly aware of the influence on his own thinking of the education he had himself received.
- d) Similarly, although he is a key figure in the history of the emergence of Separatism as a distinct strand in English religious life, Harrison's small surviving literary output does not reveal enough of his views on the form, content and influence of the education available to his contemporaries to

enable any dogmatic statement to be made as to his opinion of it. This lack of evidence is unfortunately also true of his tenure of the Mastership of Aylsham Grammar School, a post he held for only a year before being deprived for nonconformity in 1574. It would be interesting to know what changes, if any, he might have made to the curriculum of the school, and perhaps also to its pedagogical method, as a result of his developing religious convictions, had he been able to stay there longer.

- e) Harrison's four or five years' experience of leadership of a gathered church, first in partnership with Robert Browne in both Norwich and Middelburg, and then for about a year on his own after Browne departed for Scotland in 1584, would presumably have furnished him with ideas for the education of the clergy; but although four of his five known surviving works emanate from this period, his thinking on this topic does not seem to have matured to the point where it could be characterised as a clear-cut contribution to a distinctive Separatist position on this issue.

Henry Barrow c. 1550-1593

Henry Barrow⁴³ was born in the middle of the sixteenth century, in the reign of Edward VI, and shares with John Greenwood the

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R. Tudur Jones, op. cit., 17, 18, 465
 F.J. Powicke, Henry Barrow, Separatist (1550? - 1593)
and the Exiled Church of Amsterdam (1593-1622)
 (London, James Clarke & Co., 1900)

distinction of being the first Congregational martyr - the two were hanged at Tyburn on 6 April 1593. He originated from Norfolk and, like his contemporary Robert Browne, had family connections with Lord Burghley. According to R.W. Dale,⁴⁴ he attended, together with Greenwood and Penry, the 'privye Church' in Southwark of which Richard Fitz was minister in 1567. It is known that he graduated from Clare Hall, Cambridge in either 1569 or 1570, and that he had led a very reckless life at college. In 1576 he entered Gray's Inn; and C. Silvester Horne notes a reference to the fact that Barrow "attended Her Majesty's Court".⁴⁵ Barrow appears to have undergone a dramatic and totally transforming conversion experience.

As he and a companion were passing a church one Lord's Day they heard the preacher very loud in his sermon. Barrow proposed that they should go in. 'Tush!' said the other. 'What, shall we go to hear a man talk?' In they both went, however, and at least one of the two came out a changed man. Lord Bacon's words have often been quoted where he says that the Brownists had not 'been much known at all' but for Browne's pamphlets, 'and had not also one Barrowe, being a gentleman of a good house, but one that lived in London at ordinaries, and there learned to argue in table-talk, and so was very much known in the city and abroad, made a leap from a vain and libertine youth to a preciseness in the highest degree - the strangeness of which alteration made him very much spoken of'.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ R.W. Dale, History of English Congregationalism (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1907) 92 ff.

⁴⁵ C.S. Horne, A Popular History of the Free Churches (London, Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1903) 40

⁴⁶ Idem

In November 1586, he visited John Greenwood in the Clink, and was arrested without warrant on the orders of Archbishop Whitgift for starting an argument as to what the term 'bishop' means in the New Testament. His A True Description of the Visible Congregation of the Saints was published in 1589, and A Brief Discovery of the False Church in 1590; these ventures resulted in his being charged with circulating seditious frauds. When his trial, in company with John Greenwood, opened on 11 March 1593, he admitted that he was responsible for certain printed pamphlets, this admission was promptly used as preliminary evidence when proceedings were resumed on 23 March. The government's rapidly increasing alarm at what it clearly perceived as a growing threat from the Separatists is reflected in the ludicrously-inflated charge brought against Barrow and Greenwood on that occasion, namely, that they were revolutionists and traitors, bent on destroying the monarchy and the church, and "abrogating of all good laws and ordinances, even at one clapp which had been in making for the good government of this Church above a thousand and fower hundred years."⁴⁷ On three separate occasions, 24 March, 31 March and 6 April, Barrow and Greenwood were subjected to the extreme psychological torture of being taken from prison to the place of execution, only to be reprieved at the very last moment on the first two of those occasions. Significantly, the establishment paid its own tribute to the worth of the two men when, reluctantly

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Ibid., 49

responding to Queen Elizabeth's question as to what he thought of the victims, Dr. Reynolds replied "that he was persuaded if they had lived they would have been two as worthy instruments of the Church of God as have been raised up in this age". Her Majesty sighed, and said no more.⁴⁸

Henry Barrow is of primary importance as a source of information about the early Separatists and their struggle with the late Elizabethan politico-religious establishment because he committed his experiences, as well as his opinions, to paper. His own account of his trials and examinations was, in Dexter's rather flowery words, "clandestinely inscribed upon contraband paper with surreptitious ink by the dim light of dirty and grated windows". Silvester Horne maintains the style:

Keepers had to be eluded; proof had to be made of the loyalty and courage of friends to smuggle the precious manuscripts out of the prison precincts. Sometimes it was Robert Stokes who thus put his own life in jeopardy; sometimes it was Greenwood's wife, or 'Cycely, the maid-servant'. Stokes and a certain Robert Bull went to the Low Countries with the 'copy' and one 'Hanse' at Dort did the printing. The sheets were then committed to Robert Stokes' 'clock-bag', and warily smuggled back into England, where 'one Mychens' appears to have had them bound and distributed.⁴⁹

This excerpt throws, with its mention of 'Cycely the maid-servant', a tiny but fascinating shaft of light on the risks taken by members

⁴⁸ Ibid., 51

⁴⁹ Ibid., 47

of the households of the pioneer Separatists, in assisting them in their subversive undertakings; it would be interesting to know if this was done under compulsion, or from personal conviction on the part of the servant.

Barrow is sometimes given the same title of 'Father of Modern Congregationalism' as is more usually bestowed on Robert Browne; but authorities differ as to his exact beliefs. He himself vigorously denied being a mere 'sectary'. It is just possible, though unlikely, that where Browne advocated separation from the established church as a means to a spiritual democracy, Barrow appears to have believed that any theory of church government was wholly corrupt. To that extent, and provided that the interpretation is correct, Barrow may justly be described as even more radical in his thinking than Robert Browne was. Barrow's work, however, is not a carefully thought-out and ordered exposition. He wrote with an intensity of passion generated by the pressure of the circumstances in which he found himself at any given time; hence, his writings do not yield a reasoned theory of education. Nevertheless, it is possible to collate passing, sometimes almost casual, references to education in the extant corpus of his works, to gain an impression of his attitude to this matter. He was much concerned with, and sternly critical of, the clergy of the Church of England, and their education. Roundly condemning as unscriptural the whole range of ecclesiastical titles in vogue in the church in his day (he lists no fewer than 34 of them), Barrow then turns his attention to the

colleges which breed aspirants to these varying distinctions. With the forthrightness of expression characteristic of sixteenth-century polemics, Barrow describes the colleges as cages of unclean birds, like the seminaries of the pope, and not unlike the Turkish seraglios with their captive Janissaries - they are comprised of boys and young men who lead lives of idleness and revelry. It seems, however, that they cannot have been idle all of the time, since Barrow castigates sharply their study of Greek and Latin, which he asserts is based on the writings of lascivious poets and heathen philosophers. Like Browne, he inveighs against the dead hand of scholasticism which still exercises its throttling control over the curriculum of the colleges; Aristotle and Cicero are still the dominant influences. A careful examination of what Barrow actually says reveals that he did not condemn logic per se out of hand; but he condemns the study of it in his time as being formal and barren. Rhetoric is, in his view, superficial and stilted, and philosophy is devoid of true theological doctrine. His criticisms are probably summed up in his accusation that the study of divinity in the colleges is dependent on the writings of men rather than on the word of God.

It is important to acknowledge that, in common with the other early Separatists, Barrow had first of all a clear and intellectually rigorous doctrine of the church, because it is from this root that his views on other topics derive; on the bedrock principle of Scriptura Sola he constructs his positive concepts of the church, its constitution and

function, its ministry, and the proper preparation of aspirants to that ministry. For despite the accusations levelled against them by their opponents, these early Separatists were not anarchists, wholly bent on disorder and destruction. Barrow rebuts with dignity charges that his views entail "barbaritie, dissolutenes, and in the end change the government from a monarchie to democratie or anarchie".⁵⁰ He writes "These calumniationes tending to the hie contumelie and reproch of that ministerie, order and government which Christ hath prescribed in his Testament, yea, even of the gospel and sacred person of Christ himself, deserve rather censure than answer".⁵¹ Barrow is far from being anti-epistemological; after commenting that the effects with which Cooper charged Separatist polity "were never found to follow the sincere practise of the gospel, to which whoso consenteth not, is puffed up and knoweth nothing, how wise or learned soever he seem in his own eyes", he advances the positive viewpoint, echoing Scripture,⁵² that

where the gospel is purely taught and faithfully obeyed, there, sayth the prophet, shall the earth overflow with knowledge as the sea with waters. And as to the church of God, it is sayd the pillar and sure keeper of truth, the nourserie of all good

⁵⁰ T. Cooper, An Admonition to the People of England (1589)

⁵¹ H. Barrow, The First Part of the Platforme (1611) G8 recto

⁵² Habakkuk 2, verse 14 (New English Bible, Oxford and Cambridge, 1970) - although the quotation violates modern exegetical principles, since the prophet is not, of course, referring to the Gospel and its teaching and obedience, which is the burden of Barrow's use of the text

education, the schoole of all holy knowledge, no enemy but a favourer of all lawfull artes and science ... There are men of all degrees instructed in their dueties from the hiest to the lowest ... Into the church of Christ entereth no profane, ignorant or ungodly person.⁵³

Barrow is critical of the assumption that a graduate of the universities will be competent to undertake the obligations and responsibilities of a clergyman without further training.

When they have once gotten this degree upon them, there is now never a benefice in a shire, but if it be ready for them, they are fit for it. There is now no question to be made before any ordinarie in England of their learning. They need not now be posed by the doctors, by masse chancelor or masse commissarie, how many sonnes Noah had, or whether they can reade distinctly the homilies, injunctions and service booke; all this they could do whiles they were Bible clarkes and fellowes in the colledge; everie morning next their heartes, they said over this geare. Neither shal they be enjoined to conne certayne chapters of the testament without booke, their hood and tippet sheweth they have learning inough; and together with their mother the universities' licence to preach, excuseth them of all this stirre, which other poore priestes do passe, but unto them it could not, without the dishonour of the universitie and shame of their degree be offred.⁵⁴

It is only fair to point out that Barrow's charge against the universities and the education they provided for intending clergymen is not so much that they neglected the Scriptures, as that they used them wrongly in the sense of making them yield interpretations which appeared to serve the purpose of proving

⁵³ H. Barrow, op. cit., G8 verso

⁵⁴ Ibid.

conclusions which had been decided on beforehand, instead of allowing the Scriptures themselves to formulate the doctrines of the church. He castigates men who

with their traditional and philosophical glosses, corrupting, obscuring, and perverting the pure text with their logical conclusions and rhetorical figures; give libertie to their wittes in their learning to deface, strive and dispute against the holy knowne truth of God, making and tossing it as a tennise ball amongst them, both publikly in the schooles and privatly in their colledges at their problemes.⁵⁵

Viewed from a distance of four hundred years, Barrow's arguments often appear to be injudiciously expressed, given the known hostility of Elizabeth I to any ideology which might disrupt the fragile national unity so painfully cobbled together in the early part of the reign. It is far too facile to say that Barrow deserved what he got; but he was surely skating on very thin ice when he made such statements as:

I hope, by this little which hath beene said, concerning the education and training of these our great divines, it appeareth unto all men (that will judg by the word of God and are endued with the spirit of God) what kind of fellowships these universitie colleges are, what kind of cages full of uncleane birdes, of foule and hateful spirites, etc.

- or this - "The universities of Oxford and Cambridg have a popish original. Therefore Queen Elisabeth ought to abolish them".⁵⁶ Once again, however, it needs to be appreciated that Barrow's caustic

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

criticism of the universities and the education they provided for intending clergymen must be taken seriously - as a product of the system himself, he spoke from inside knowledge, so it does not spring from personal resentment or jealousy, nor from merely destructive nihilism. Rather it originates from his profound and passionate concern for the purity, he might even have said the very life, of the church in England in his day and age.

As there is no building without the word of God for the foundation; so is there no fellowship or communion out of the church of God. And therefore no such confused colledges, no such idolatrous assemblies as are not gathered unto Christ but unto antichrist, as live not in that christian order and fellowship which Christ hath appointed to all his servants in his church, but leade their lives in antichristian disorder in Babilonish, if not Sodomitish, confusion; no such heathen schooles wherein youth is not trained up in the feare, knowledg, and order of Christ, but in vaine arts, superstition, idolatrie, disorder, etc., have any foundation in the word of God, any fellowship with or allowance in the church of God.⁵⁷

Critical though he was of the university education of his day, it has to be acknowledged that it stood Barrow in good stead when it came to anticipating and countering the responses his diatribes inevitably drew forth.

But heere wil the universitie knights draw me within the compasse of these two absurdities: first that I condemne all good arts and literature; then, that I quite drive them out of the world by taking away the schooles of the same, wherein youth might be trained and brought up. Nothing lesse, I with my whole heart allow of any art or science that is consonant to the

word of God, and to the doctrine which is according to godlines: only the curious and heathen artes, prophane and vaine bablings and oppositions of science falsely so caled which they professe and wherwith they poison and corrupt al the youth of the land, I abhorre, because God condemneth.

At this point, we reach a key statement in the consideration of the attitudes of the early modern English Separatists to education, with Barrow's unequivocal assertion that

As for schooles to teach the tongues or any laudable or necessarie art, I wish them in abundance, that if it were possible not only the youth, but even the whole church might be trayned therin: I with my whole heart wish, that al the Lord's people were prophets: such an enemy am I to true knowledg and learning, that I would not have it any longer kept secret in a myserie, but even proclaimed upon the house top in everie citie and in every street: yet still and ever with this caution, that these schooles both be in an established church (I meane in such places where the saintes live together in the faith, order, obedience and communion of Christ) and not in such monkish, idolatrous, confused, idle, profane colledges and fellowships as theirs are; likewise that the tongues or sciences be heere taught in an holy, sanctified, reverend, grave maner, and not in such an unsanctified vaine maner as they use.⁵⁸

At first sight the curriculum for university studies mentioned by Barrow does not, in the context of its times, appear to be unduly narrow; he refers to philosophy, ethics, economics, politics, science, meteorology, astronomy and astrology. However, the first five are all approached through Aristotle (albeit Aristotle as filtered through not much short of two millennia of selection and interpretation); and the next three are included in the category of

studies which Barrow characterises as curious and profane arts, unfit for a Christian, let alone a Christian clergyman. Carlson remarks that "Barrow's comments on education may be taken cum grano salis".⁵⁹ He speculates that his legal and secular studies may have led him to the conclusion that education should be centred around the Bible. It is difficult to understand the reasoning behind this statement; even the qualification "after his dramatic conversion" does not clarify why or how legal and secular studies could have had a religious outcome.

Barrow can, however, at least be credited with the virtue of consistency. His A Plaine Refutation repeats the theme of his earlier writings:

Neither is their education and learning (if they be duellie examined) such as is required in the holy ministerie of Christ; all of them (as is said) being nourished from their cradles with the milke of superstition, instructed in the scholes of heathen vanitie, brought up in the colleges of more tha[n] monkish idlenes, and disorder, exercised in the vaine and curious artes, whose divinitie is by tradition, etc.⁶⁰

Stung by Gifford's assertion that he could find "in the universities many bachelours of arte far exceeding in the knowledge of the liberall artes, the three tongues, Hebrew, Greek, and Latine, or in sounde judgment of divinitie, even the principall masters of

⁵⁹ L.H. Carlson (ed.), The Writings of Henry Barrow 1590-1591, Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts V (London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1966) 13

⁶⁰ H. Barrow, A Plaine Refutation of Mr. George Giffarde's Reprochful Booke (Dort, 1591) 117

Brownisme", Barrow retorted that

if it could in so few yeeres be obtained with more than monkish idleness, then may the Brownistes in some thing be believed ... There are, of those he [Gifford] calleth Brownistes, sondrie of greater continuance, and that have as high degree in those scholes, with as high commendation as himself, although they boaste not of such thinges whereof they ought to be ashamed.⁶¹

This sounds a bit far-fetched to modern ears; contemporary opinion will regard it as a strength to the Separatists' cause that they had arrived at their position through the exercise of intellectually trained minds, notwithstanding Barrow's unhappiness with the content of that training - in this instance, manner is of greater significance than matter.

Moreover, it was not only at university level that the first Separatists placed high value on education. It may be significant that in the following extract Barrow moves from the singular to the plural, perhaps because he is conscious that here he is expressing views widely held among his fellow Separatists:

Yet would I not heere, that anie should deeme or suppose that wee condemne anie lawful artes or necessarie sciences, anie holie exercises, or scholes of institution ... No, wee are so far from it ... We desire with our whole hearts, that the tongues and other godlie artes were taught, not in the universities or a few places onlie, but in all places where an established church is, at the least in everie citie of the land.

⁶¹

Ibid., 118

His thought moves on to include the family, as well as the church and the school:

Yet this indeede we hold, that everie christian man ought to have his abiding and dwelling, and to bring up his children, in some such place where a christian congregation is, and that all scholes of learning ought to be kept in such places where both teachers and schollers may be under the holie government and censures of Christ in his church, and may live and be kept in holie order ... that the artes and sciences which are thus taught or studied, be not vayne, curious, or unlawful, but necessarie and godlie ... that they be not taught, exercised, or practized after anie prophane, vaine glorious, or superstitious maner, but in al sobrietie, modestie, and in the feare of God.⁶²

In modern phraseology, he has delineated parameters for both the curriculum, and the pedagogical method to be used in expounding the curriculum. It is doubtful whether his idealistic proposals were ever put into practice; the nearest approximation to them was probably the Dissenting Academies in the 18th century; but one of their points of excellence was that they offered a 'modern' curriculum which would almost certainly not have found favour with Barrow.

- (a) The Separatists were perhaps fortunate in attracting the interest and loyalty of men of the calibre of Henry Barrow, the more elusive Robert Harrison and the larger-than-life Robert Browne. Barrow shared with Browne the initial advantage of a 'good' family background, which made it more likely that his views would be noticed and considered

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H. Barrow, op. cit., 123

than if he came from the kind of humble background characteristic of the Separatists referred to in chapter five below. Barrow also enjoyed, along with Browne and Harrison, the relatively rare privilege of a university education; and as was increasingly the tendency among young men of his social class, he progressed from university to one of the Inns of Court, and had the opportunity of enjoying all the benefits that birth, breeding and money could bestow on the favoured few in his day.

- (b) Barrow cannot be charged with being content with mere denunciations of what he believed to be the faults and failings of the infant Anglican Church; but whereas Browne was willing to champion a specific route (i.e, separation from the established church) toward the common goal of a spiritual democracy, or perhaps more accurately, a Christocracy, Barrow's apparent belief that any and every theory of church order was corrupt, can be interpreted on the one hand as not providing a positive counterbalance to the negativism of his criticism, or on the other hand, as offering an alternative at the extreme radical end of the spectrum of choices of action.

- (c) and (d) There can, however, be no equivocation over the effectiveness of his castigation of the education he had himself received, and which, when he wrote, was all that was available to his contemporaries. Barrow is significant for the extent to which he put forward positive proposals, not

only for the revision and modernisation of the university curriculum, but also for the virtually universal extension of every level of education - "I would not have it [true knowledge and learning] any longer kept secret in a mystery, but even proclaimed upon the house top in every city and in every street".

- (e) Of the three pioneers here identified as constituting the first wave of Separatists, Barrow provides by far the most extensive survey of clerical education in his day, and also the widest-ranging proposals for its reformation. From the state of the colleges at which intending clergymen prepared for their vocation, through the curriculum they studied there, to the ecclesiastical titles they so lusted after once they had been ordained - nothing is spared the lash of Barrow's scorn. Nevertheless, he is very far from being the anarchist wholly bent on disorder and destruction, with which he was charged; he offered a positive alternative to what he believed should be done away with - an alternative, moreover, which did not blindly reject everything inherited from the past, but acknowledged the value, and recommended the retention, of whatever could be demonstrated as being relevant to the needs of ministers in a church reformed in full consonance with the Scriptures.

It can hardly be denied that the three men considered in this chapter were advocates and leaders of a major revolution in the

sphere of ecclesiastical thought and practice; yet their contemporaries could have reasonably expected them to be sound 'establishment' men. Each of them came from privileged family backgrounds, and had come under conservative influences in their formative years, and in their educational experiences. Taken together, their writings constitute a comprehensive criticism of the church scene of their day - both negatively, in their highlighting of inconsistencies, faults and failures, and positively, in their advocacy of a more thorough restoration of the church to its pristine purity. Browne and Harrison do not give the impression that they were aware of the impact made on their thinking by their own education; but their deficiency in this respect is more than compensated for by Barrow's eagerness to have the benefits of education made as widely available as possible. Similarly, while Harrison says very little about the education of the clergy, this is a major concern of Browne and Barrow. Their comments are of fundamental importance to the emergence of a specifically Separatist philosophy, not of clerical education only, but of the whole concept, for the whole of the church and ultimately for the whole of society as well.

ANALYSIS FROM THE EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF LEADING FIRST WAVE SEPARATISTS

TABLE REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



(See chapter 4, pages 277 to 281 for comment on this data)

CHAPTER 4**CASE STUDIES OF LEADING FIGURES - II:
THE SECOND WAVE - FROM GREENWOOD TO OWEN**

This chapter surveys the extension of the Separatist contribution to the life of early modern England after its first irruption onto the national scene in the 1580's. There is inevitably an element of artificiality in trying to divide one continuous flow into differentiated sections; but Browne, Harrison and Barrow together can be characterised as constituting the initial manifestation of a new movement in English religious life. Harrison's early death, Browne's rapid apostasy and Barrow's savage martyrdom, all occurring within the short span of the eight years between 1585 and 1593, could so very easily have resulted in the new phenomenon faltering and failing; but the 17 prominent men reviewed in this chapter constituted in effect a second wave of the Separatist movement, by harnessing the vigour of the three pioneers, and channelling it into a course which was to set the direction of religious Nonconformity in England for the next four hundred years.

These 17 men effectively select themselves, because of the dearth of evidence about adherents of a small and, in the eyes of the authorities, extremist movement which, for reasons of political stability and national unity in dangerous times, could certainly not be tolerated. There is a distinct sense of development about them, which lends homogeneity to the group, and justifies regarding them

as a second wave in the emergence of Separatism in England, although Doran and Durston's important comment must be noted that

It is very difficult to estimate with any degree of accuracy the extent of Dissent during Charles II's reign ... It has been suggested that somewhere between 15 and 20 per cent of the population of London may have been Dissenters during Charles II's reign, although the figure for the country as a whole would have been appreciably lower than this.¹

Obviously there were many other, less prominent, Separatists in the country at this time; but their very non-prominence is both cause and effect of the scarcity of evidence about them. This fact raises the spectre of the possibility of distortion; for example, the summary tables at the end of this chapter reveal that with only one exception all 17 of these men were university-educated, and 12 of them were published authors. Similarly, the work-experience column shows, not surprisingly, that in one capacity or another, all were leaders among the Separatists. However, as far as the surviving records permit, an attempt is made in the next chapter to compensate for the possibility of distortion by analysing the social background, exposure to education, and economic function of 'ordinary', i.e., non-leader, Separatists.

¹

S. Doran and C. Durston, Princes, Pastors and People: The Church and Religion in England, 1529-1689 (London and New York, Routledge, 1991) 118

John Greenwood ?-1593

John Greenwood's writings² have not all survived, and those still available to us have in some instances been preserved only at second-hand, through being quoted by other writers. On the larger canvas, Greenwood was anxious to rebut the charge made in the title of George Giffard's A Short Treatise Against the Donatists of England, Whome we call Brownists, published in 1590. (Donatism takes its name from Donatus who led a fourth-century separatist church in Africa. Interestingly for this study, that church displayed characteristics strikingly similar to those of late sixteenth-century English Separatism, such as rigorism, a puritan ecclesiology, an adulation of martyrdom and an apocalyptic rejection of state and society). A more detailed concern of Greenwood's was to explain the Separatists' attitude to read prayers, which they regarded as the antithesis of true worship. His views are expressed in his brief article Reasons Against Read Prayer, which may be the earliest of his writings still extant; it can be tentatively assigned to 1588,

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The Harleian Miscellany IV (c. 1745) 338-340;
 B. Brook, The Lives of the Puritans (3 vols., London, James Black, 1813) 23-44;
 C.L. Kingsford in Dictionary of National Biography XXIII (1890) 84 ff.;
 F.J. Powicke, Henry Barrow, Separatist (1550? - 1593) and the Exiled Church of Amsterdam (1593-1622) (London, James Clarke & Co., 1900) 15 and 31-80 passim;
 "Relics of the Puritan Martyrs, 1593" Congregational Historical Society, (1906) 17-23;
 C. Burrage, Early English Dissenters (2 vols., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1912) I, 121-122;
 R. Tudur Jones, Congregationalism in England 1662-1962 (London, Independent Press Ltd., 1962) 17-18;

though it might even have preceded the Fragment of a Letter of late 1587. But had George Giffard not reproduced Greenwood's Reasons Against Read Prayer, and summarised the latter's Reply to George Giffard, we should have no knowledge at all of material in manuscripts which have long since disappeared.

The same comments apply to another fragmentary writing which Carlson³ ascribes to John Greenwood, although he also acknowledges that on stylistic grounds, it could be attributed to Henry Barrow. This fragment is part of a letter, quite possibly addressed to Thomas Cartwright when he was in prison in either 1590 or 1591. The letter was intercepted, and the fragment has been preserved for posterity only because Richard Bancroft, a hostile witness, printed it in his A Survey of the Pretended Holy Discipline (London, 1593), page 430. Its references to 'majors or antecedents' and 'minors or conclusions' suggest that the writer had benefited from a university education, and was confident in his handling and application of the formal terms of the logic and rhetoric he had mastered there.

Carlson concedes⁴ that Greenwood may have collaborated with Henry Barrow in the writing, or at least suggested the arguments in the last four pages, of A Collection of Certain Letters and

³ L.H. Carlson (ed.), The Writings of John Greenwood 1587-1590 Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts IV, (London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1962) 93

⁴ Ibid., 97

Conferences Passed Betwixt Certain Preachers and Two Prisoners in the Fleet. This was a treatise of 75 pages printed secretly at Dort (Dordrecht) in the Netherlands by, according to Robert Boull, "one Hanse" (or Hause - possibly Hans Stell) in about July 1590. The last four pages, which constitute the last of the four parts of the work, set out the characteristics of the true church and the false, and seem to have been written about September 1588, as a challenge to the Presbyterian leaders Thomas Cartwright, Walter Travers, William Charke and William Floyde (or Fludd). They are apparently a re-presentation of arguments which had remained unanswered for eighteen months, a conclusion which may be deduced from the fact that although they appear in a volume printed in 1590, they are printed separately under the year 1588.

In about March 1591, Greenwood wrote A Breife Refutation of Mr. George Giffard His Supposed Consimilitude betwene the Donatists and Us, Wherein is Shewed How His arguments Have Bene and May Be by the Papists More Justly Retorted against Himself and Present Estate of Their Church. As its title indicates, it comprises a denial of any parallels between the fourth century Donatists in Africa, and the sixteenth century Separatists in England and is an answer to the first part of Gifford's A Plaine Declaration that our Brownists Be Point Out of the Writings of Augustine. Also a Replie to Master Greenwood Touching Read Prayer, Wherein His Grosse Ignorance Is Detected, Which Labouring to Purge Himselfe from Former Absurdities, Doth Plunge Himselfe Deeper into the Mire.

This second part of Gifford's book was responded to by Greenwood in his A Fewe Observations of Mr. Giffard's Last Cavills about Stinted Read Prayers, and Devised Leitourgies, also written in the early Spring of 1591, and published in April of that year as part of Barrow's book A Plaine Refutation of Mr. George Giffarde's Reprochful Booke; but it was the entire edition of this work, apart from a few copies, which was seized at Flushing in the Netherlands and burnt at the instigation of the English Ambassador, Sir Robert Sidney, with the assistance of Francis Johnson, preacher to the English merchants in Middelburg. Of the two copies known to have survived this disaster, Francis Johnson kept one, and gave the other to an unidentified friend, who may have been George Gifford, since the latter was able to produce and publish a reply to it, in December 1591.

In the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, which was the alma mater of the Separatists Robert Browne, Robert Harrison and John Robinson, as well as of John Greenwood, there are the latter's Notes for a Sermon against Adultery (MS 547). Carlson points out⁵ that there is no suggestion of a date, nor any internal evidence to provide a clue; he suggests 1592 because the period from May to December of that year was the only time when Greenwood was out of prison between 8 October 1587 and his

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L.H. Carlson (ed.), The Writings of John Greenwood and Henry Barrow 1591-1593. Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts VI (London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970) 74

execution on 6 April 1593. The document may be an attempt to resolve the doubts and questions of a group of Separatists who had asked for help - the last paragraph expresses Greenwood's hope that his comments will prove profitable to his readers.

At his two examinations, on 11 and 20 March 1593, Greenwood admitted that he was the author of several treatises and one book, and that he had copies of them in his possession; but he refused to divulge the names of any other owners or readers of his writings, apart from that of Robert Stokes. Stokes had been a chief agent in seeing the books through the press; but he subsequently recanted, and made his peace with the Church of England, thus rendering him in the eyes of John Greenwood and the other Separatists, an apostate, a renegade, an informer, a traitor.

Thomas Helwys c.1550-1616

Thomas Helwys⁶ was born at about the same time as Robert Browne, Robert Harrison, Henry Barrow and John Greenwood. It would be interesting to know whether or not men born in the middle of the sixteenth century, whose earliest and most impressionable years had been passed, first in the religiously radical reign of Edward VI, and then in the diametrically opposed atmosphere of Mary I's reversion to Romanism, were conditioned to gravitate to extreme positions. Be that as it may, it is a fact that

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A.C. Bickley in Dictionary of National Biography XXV (1891) 375 ff.;

W.H. Burgess, John Smith, the Se-Baptist, Thomas Helwys and the first Baptist Church in England (London, J. Clarke & Co., 1911) 107-296 passim

five of the first leading English Separatists grew to manhood in the first decade of Elizabeth I's reign, when the settlement of religion was being hammered out, and imposed on a probably largely indifferent populace. Such apathy was anathema to the likes of Thomas Helwys. Born into a Nottinghamshire family, he studied at Gray's Inn, and is generally acknowledged to have been the founder and first pastor of probably the first General Baptist Church in England.

Helwys was among the Separatists who were either forced into exile, or chose it before they were condemned to it on account of their religious convictions. As so many of them did, he went to the Low Countries, and in 1606 joined John Smyth's English Independent Church in Amsterdam; but in 1609, he was excommunicated, along with Smyth himself, for advocating, probably under Mennonite influence, believers' baptism, and for Arminian theological views. On Smyth's death in 1610 Helwys succeeded him as Pastor of a Baptist Church in Amsterdam; and the next year he published a Declaration of Faith for his little congregation. It contained a notable definition of baptism, which would probably not be repudiated by his Baptist successors nearly four centuries later - "the outward manifestation of dying with Christ and walking in newness of life; and therefore in nowise appertaineth to infants". Even more importantly, it enunciates, perhaps for the first time in the history of the modern western world, the principle of the right of full individual freedom of

conscience - "the magistrate not to meddle with religion or matters of conscience, nor compel men to this or that form of religion".

In 1611, Helwys and his congregation returned to England and established a church in Pinners' Hall, in Newgate Street. Baptism was by Mennonite-style affusion, not total immersion. Helwys was apparently a powerful preacher. Certainly his church grew rapidly, but he encountered opposition when in 1611 or 1612 he published his Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity, written and printed in Holland. It contained the first sustained plea by an English divine for universal religious toleration, and it denied the state's right to legislate on matters concerning a person's relation to God. As far as can be ascertained, no information as to Helwys' death is extant, but he is believed to have died in about 1616.

John Penry c.1559-1593

The third of the trio of Elizabethan martyrs for the cause of 'reformation without tarrying for anie' was the Welsh puritan pamphleteer John Penry.⁷ Born in Brecknockshire in 1559, he

⁷ J. Waddington, Life of John Penry (London, W. & F.G. Cash, 1854);
 S. Lee in Dictionary of National Biography XLIV (1895) 346-350;
 H.M. White, Life of Penry (London, Alexander and Shephard, 1899);
 C. Burrage, An Account of Penry's Trial (London, Henry Frowde, 1913);
 W. Pierce, John Penry (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1923);
 A. Peel (ed.), "The Note-book of John Penry" (London, Camden Society, 3rd series, LXVII, 1944);
 D. Williams, John Penry, Three Treatises Concerning Wales (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1960);
 R. Tudur Jones, op. cit., 18

enjoyed the special educational advantage of graduating at both Cambridge (Peterhouse) and Oxford (St. Albans Hall). It was at Cambridge that Penry embraced Puritanism; and although he was never ordained, he preached extensively in the open-air in Wales. He was one of the suspects in the establishment's search for the printing press which, over a period of eighteen months or so between 1588 and 1590, produced a series of anti-episcopal tracts under the imprint of Martin Marprelate; but convincing evidence against him in this matter was not produced at the time, nor has it emerged since. When it became evident in 1590 that the authorities were closing in on him, he escaped to Edinburgh; but the pressure of persecution drove him steadily into a more radical position, and by 1591 he was aligning himself openly with the Separatists, rather than with conforming puritans still struggling to reconcile their convictions with the half-way position of the Anglican Church.

Penry returned to London from Scotland in the first week of October 1592, and there is a record⁸ of his having preached, in company with John Greenwood, in the garden of a house at Duke's Place, near Aldgate, in December of that year, possibly on the third day of the month. On the 14th Penry left London again for Reading, together with John Edwardes. He is not heard of again until 10 March 1593, when his petition was presented to Parliament. Almost inevitably, this led to his arrest on the 22nd,

⁸L.H. Carlson (ed.), op. cit., 500

along with Arthur Bellot, Edward Grave and George Knyvton. Penry was examined by Richard Young on 24 March, and on 26 March he conferred with him and Dr. Richard Vaughan. It was on that same day that a special commission was appointed to conduct examinations of Separatists and recusants. Penry conferred with Dr. Nicholas Balgay on 28 March, and on 2 April with Dr. Thomas Crooke, Richard Greenham and Robert Temple. The persecution of the Separatists was now coming to its climax; Penry was one of the 12 who were examined on 5 April, but so convinced were the authorities that he was one of their most significant catches, that he was subjected to a second interrogation on the same day, by Dean Gabriell Goodman, Matthew Dale, John Barne and Richard Young.

Intimidation reached a new and grisly height when on the next day, 6 April, Barrow and Greenwood, after suffering the extreme torment of two last-minute reprieves, on 24 March and 31 March, were finally hanged. That Penry was convinced that he too would be executed is evidenced by the farewell letter to his wife which he wrote on the day on which his fellow-believers sealed their witness with their lives. He was, however, not to suffer immediately. On 10 April he was examined again, this time by Henry Fanshawe and Richard Young; on the same day the statute of 35 Elizabeth, chapter 1, providing for the banishment of Nonconformists, was approved by the Queen. It could be argued that this provision marked a reduction in the government's campaign against the

Separatists, in that exile would be regarded by most as preferable to execution; but Penry, aware of the pitch which matters had now reached, clearly put no such interpretation upon it, at least as far as his own case was concerned - on that very same day, 10 April, he wrote a second farewell letter, this time to his four daughters. His third farewell letter was written on 24 April to the Separatist congregation; but he continued languishing in prison, and on 15 May he was examined for the third time, by an array of six interrogators - William Aubrey, Edward Coke, Richard Cosin, Thomas Egerton, Edward Stanhope and Richard Young. Developments in his case now gathered an increasing momentum. On 21 May he was arraigned at the Court of Queen's Bench before Chief Justice Popham, and after a fourth examination on 24 May by Richard Young, was on 25 May arraigned a second time at the Court of Queen's Bench, indicted, convicted and sentenced to death. On 28 May he penned his last writing, to Chief Justice John Popham, and on 29 May he was hanged at Thomas a Watering in Southwark.

When it arose naturally out of a writer's current preoccupation, education assumed a prominent place in the concerns of early modern English Separatists. This fact is well demonstrated in the case of John Penry. In 1587, a good four years before he openly espoused Separatism, he published The Aequity of an Humble Supplication. This was a plea to Queen and Parliament for the provision of clergy for Wales, Penry's own homeland. In it, he

contended that the result of the lack of a teaching ministry was that the Welsh were living in spiritual ignorance and darkness, and that their only desire was to be taught the knowledge of God and His Laws. The Puritans had made similar requests for the people of England; a petition presented to Parliament in 1584 had pleaded for a supply of good teachers to meet the need for knowledge of the Scriptures. Possibly this request reflected the inability of a significant proportion of the population to read the Scriptures for themselves - though that of itself would not necessarily reveal anything about levels of literacy in Elizabethan England; it might have as much to do with shortages of Bibles as with ability to read them. Be that as it may, it seems that in many places in Wales there was no-one who could preach at Sunday services, and Penry earnestly advocated his conviction that people could only be saved from falling into error and wickedness if there was a good supply of ministers to teach them.⁹

It is immediately apparent that a deep presumption of the value of education underlay Penry's concept of the church reformed according to the Word of God. Penry pleaded for preachers, not priests; and the words 'teaching' and 'knowledge', occurring as often as they do in his writings, suggest his over-riding concern with matters educational in the broadest sense of the term. He does, however, make clear his belief that if it is to be in any way

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A. Peel (ed.), The Seconde Part of a Register I
(Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1915) 268

worthwhile, education must have a religious basis - i.e., a Christian, i.e. a Protestant, basis. But he goes further than that; he sounds a surprisingly modern note with his assertion that it is the duty of Parliament to provide such an education. It is intriguing to realise that Nonconformist aversion to education being vested in the hands of the established church, an aversion which was so forcibly expressed as recently as the first decade of the twentieth century, appears to have been a consistent feature of the Separatist/Dissenting/Non-conformist/Free Church stance throughout the whole of its history.

Penry might seem to modern minds to run the risk of spoiling his case by overstatement when he goes so far as to attribute the Babington Plot of 1586 to Parliament's failure to provide education; but he insists that continuing failure to meet this responsibility would result in future generations blaming Queen Elizabeth for derogation of her duty to ensure that the true religion which she professed was made known to them.¹⁰ He is wholly uncompromising in his assertion that lack of religious education would result in ignorance of the Christian (i.e. Protestant) religion, and the predominance of superstition or atheism (i.e., Romanism, or a crude instinctive natural religion).¹¹ For Penry, religious education extended to his proposal that the universities should be utilised more efficiently, to provide more clergy; this is an example of the

¹⁰ J. Penry, op. cit., 37-39

¹¹ Ibid., 46

professional concept of the purpose of a university which was characteristic of educational thought until well towards the middle of the nineteenth century.

Penry committed himself to the interesting estimate that the two universities between them provided something in the region of 300 clergymen a year; and he gives it as his opinion that this number might be doubled by providing livings in Wales - most of Wales could, even then, accommodate English-speaking clergy. He declares that of the 3,400 graduates which he estimated one of the universities (unspecified) had produced since 1558 (i.e. in the preceding 30 years - Penry was writing in 1587), 400 should be settled in Wales as clergymen, "whereas, at this day we have not 12 in all our country that doe discharge their duty in any good sort".¹² Foreman advances the debasing of their calling by idle clergy, and the anti-puritanism of some of the rest of them, as factors which might account for this state of affairs. Penry warned that if the situation were not soon remedied, "wee may be eight and twenty years more without the word of God preached".

The assertion that it is at best misleading, and at worst downright inaccurate, to force the first Separatists into artificial and mutually exclusive categories of 'for' and 'against' education is supported by Penry's perceptive comment that "Private men that were never of universities have well profited in divinity. These no doubt would

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Ibid., 55

prove more upright in heart ... than many of our learned men."¹³ Once again, Penry sounds a refreshingly modern note. Although he does not express himself in so many words, it is surely reasonable to deduce that a logical consequence of his idea would be the employment of laymen in teaching and preaching the Scriptures and Christian doctrine and practice. Furthermore, Penry contends without qualms for the acceptance of non-university men as such preachers and teachers, though it goes without saying that he would take it as a sine qua non that such men would evidence their suitability for such high responsibility by both the nature of their convictions and the quality of their lives. It is also worth noting that Penry has a robustly practical appreciation of the implications of his suggestion - he indicated his awareness that the scheme he proposed would need to be financed if it were to be implemented, by urging the allocation of one-tenth of every impropriated living in Wales to the support of a teaching ministry.

Foreman contends that Penry's views align him with the Puritans rather than the Separatists since he alleges that the latter attacked the universities and the education they provided for the clergy. It is a fact that there is more moderation, and less 'fire in the belly', in Penry's expression of his convictions than is found in the writings of most of the early Separatists.

As it stands, then, there is nothing in the "Aequity" to distinguish Penry as a Separatist. Yet, he was, and

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Ibid., 54

the work illustrates that there was not necessarily general agreement amongst Separatists even in their early years, on all matters with the exception of the ideals of separation and independency in church government and order.¹⁴

John Udall c.1560-1592

Almost exactly contemporaneous with John Penry was John Udall¹⁵ (sometimes Uvedale). He was born in about 1560 and died in 1592. He was a puritan divine who had enjoyed the advantages of a Cambridge education, at Christ's College where he matriculated in 1578, and then at Trinity College. Though not himself a Separatist, he is worth noticing because he was a friend of John Penry. In 1584 he was appointed to a curacy at Kingston-upon-Thames, but was summoned before the Court of High Commission at Lambeth because of his views. He escaped severe punishment, apparently because of the help of influential aristocratic friends, such as the Countess of Warwick. He nevertheless maintained his critical attitude towards bishops and the church, and continued his friendship with Penry, whilst still remaining at Kingston; but in 1588 he was deprived of his living and accepted an invitation to minister at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. After a year there, he was accused of complicity in the production of the Marprelate Tracts - a conclusion quite possibly jumped to by the authorities because of his association with John Penry, who certainly was suspected of

¹⁴ H. Foreman, "In Defence of Education: Some Early Separatist Views" Journal of Educational Administration and History, XVII, 2, (July 1985) 4

¹⁵ S. Lee in Dictionary of National Biography LVIII (1899) 4-6

being the author of those famously effective anti-establishment diatribes. Udall was summoned to appear before the Privy Council in London in January 1590; imprisoned until July, he was eventually tried at Croydon Assizes on a charge of being the author of two anonymous tracts: A Demonstration of the Truth of that Discipline which Christ hath prescribed for the Government of His Church, and The state of the Church of England laid open in a Conference between Diotrephes a Bishop, Tertullus a Papist, Demetrius a Vsurer, Pandochus an Innkeeper and Paul a preacher of the Word of God (both 1588). He was later tried at Southwark Assizes as well, found guilty of felony and sentenced to death. Sir Walter Raleigh was among several eminent people who tried to secure his release. Arrangements were in fact completed for him to be released and to go to Syria as a chaplain with the Turkey Company, when he was taken ill and died in prison in Southwark in June 1592.

Although he was not technically one of them, it is clear that Udall's sympathies lay wholly with the thinking and teaching of the Separatists; and it is entirely appropriate to include him among them when considering their views on education in general, and their own educational achievements. The brief outline above leaves no room for doubt as to the level of his own education; and his intellectual abilities are witnessed to by his published writings. In addition to his polemical works, he produced important works revealing his skill in Hebrew e.g., his Commentary upon the

Lamentations of Jeremy, which was published posthumously. Several volumes of his sermons were also published e.g., Amendment of Life (1584), The True Remedy against Famine and Wars (1588), and The Combat between Christ and the Devil (1588). In 1593, his Key to the Holy Tongue, a Hebrew grammar translated from Peter Martyr, with a Hebrew dictionary of his own compilation, was published posthumously in Leyden. James I is said to have thought highly of it.

Francis Johnson 1561-?

Francis Johnson¹⁶ was caught up seemingly at random in the maelstrom of turbulent events; but tantalisingly little is known of him. Documentary evidence¹⁷ yields the information that in September 1592 he became pastor of the Separatist church in Southwark of which John Greenwood was teacher, and that he was arrested on 6 December, along with Greenwood and Edward Boyse. Although his appearance on the scene is so brief, it may be reasonably deduced that he was a man of some social standing, since in May 1593 he presented petitions to both Sir William Rowe, Lord Mayor of London, and to the Privy Council; it is unlikely that he would have been able to do so unless he ranked above the

¹⁶ C. Burrage, Early English Dissenters I, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1912) 141-142;
C.S. Horne, A Popular History of the Free Churches (London, Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1903, republished 1926) 58, 63, 67, 68, 78;
R.P. Stearns, The Strenuous Puritan: Hugh Peter, 1598-1660 (Urbana, University of Illinois, 1954) 53-54;
R. Tudur Jones, op. cit., 18, 19, 23

¹⁷ Ellesmere MS 2115.

majority of his fellow Separatist prisoners. This judgement is reinforced by the fact that on 2 June and again on 12 June Johnson wrote to Lord Burghley, a course of action which it would have been pointless for him to take unless he had some reasonable hope of response. His third letter to Lord Burghley, dated 8 January 1594, enclosed a separate treatise of eleven reasons as to why he should not be considered to be in danger of the statute of 35 Elizabeth, Chapter 1, which provided for the banishment of persons refusing to conform to the Church of England.

John Smyth c.1567-1612

The date of birth of John Smyth¹⁸ is variously given by different 'authorities' as 1565, 1567 and 1570; but all are agreed that he died in 1612. He is often described as the father of the English General Baptists. He was born in eastern England, and studied theology at Cambridge, where he was tutored by Francis Johnson (q.v.). He became a Fellow of Christ's College, and was ordained to the Anglican ministry by the Bishop of Lincoln. In 1600 he became a lecturer at Lincoln Cathedral; but he was dismissed in 1602 for 'personal preaching'. He appears to have embraced Separatism by 1606, and became Pastor of the Separatist Church in Gainsborough which emigrated to Amsterdam in 1607 to escape persecution at home. Smyth formed a new congregation there

¹⁸ T. Cooper in Dictionary of National Biography LIII (1898) 68-70;
 W.T. Whitley (ed.), The Works of John Smyth (2 vols., Cambridge, Baptist Historical Society, 1915) - Life (vol. 1) xvii-cxxii;
 R. Tudur Jones, op. cit., 20, 21

('The Brethren of the Separation of the Second English Church at Amsterdam'), because his views on the nature of the church differed from those of the Separatist congregation already in existence there (Thomas Helwys (vide supra), a friend from Lincoln days, was a member). Smyth became convinced of the necessity for Believers' Baptism and after baptising himself (Se-Baptism) he administered the sacrament of Christian initiation to Helwys and others on their confession of faith. Their meeting-place was a bake-house belonging to the Mennonite, Jan Munter. Smyth apparently grew distrustful of the validity of his self-baptism, and made approaches to the Waterlander Mennonite congregation; but Helwys and about ten others held back, having misgivings about the Hofmanite Christology of the Mennonites. Smyth died at the age of about 45 (or 47, or 42), after only 6 years as a Separatist, and before he could be received by the Waterlanders. He wrote no work specifically on education, but his A Patterne of True Prayer, an exposition of the Lord's Prayer which was written in 1605, before he became a Separatist, contains, in his comments on the phrase 'Thy Kingdom Come', a lengthy argument on the need for a learned ministry in the church. Since it is the duty of the minister to teach and instruct, there can be no place for the ignorant and uneducated in the church's ministry. Smyth declares that ordination should be conditional on the satisfying of educational requirements. Ordinands should be required to "render a reason of their faith in Latine", and to teach the catechism. "Ministers that want learning cannot teach ... and by this meanes the people perish

for want of knowledge".¹⁹ Like Penry 20 years earlier, "Smyth saw the provision of a good supply of learned clergy as the only solution to the ignorance, spiritual and otherwise, of the people";²⁰ however, this position is more characteristic of Puritans than of Separatists. Furthermore, Smyth believed that ministers should be trained to teach, because teaching is a skill and good learning does not necessarily make a person a good teacher. He goes so far as to say that men who could not teach should not be allowed into the ministry, since they would be "manglers and hackers of God's Word".²¹

Smyth has a significant contribution to make to Separatist pronouncements on education in his advocacy of the value of manual arts. He declares that they are God-given gifts for the care of the body which, in turn, is important for the well-being of the soul. He urges training in such "artes manuarie of preparing and fitting daily bread for our use, the moderate use whereof is lawfull, as of Cooke and Apothecarie, &c, thereby the Lord doth give us to understand that some time, and therefore, some care may be bestowed to that end".²²

¹⁹ W.T. Whitley (ed.) op. cit., 168-169.

²⁰ H. Foreman, op. cit., (1985) 4

²¹ W.T. Whitley, op. cit., 168-169

²² Ibid., 189

Foreman is perhaps too cautious in his comments:

Because of the limited material relating to education emanating from Smyth, we have to be guarded in positing any firm conclusions on his attitude, as a Separatist, to the subject. All that can be done is to show that, as a clergyman of the Church of England, influenced as he was by puritanism, Smyth valued learning highly. How far, if at all, this attitude changed on his embracing Separatism, we cannot say with any certainty. All that can be said is that as in the case of Penry from what little evidence we possess the indications are that there was very little, if any, change on Smyth's part and he serves, with Penry, as an example of the more moderate element in the Separatist movement.²³

(For completeness' sake it should be noted that Smyth also wrote A True Description out of the Word of God of the Visible Church (1589), and The Differences of the Churches of the Separation (1608)). Foreman's own comment is that "Smyth [was] concerned with education as it affected the clergy". This is true, but the statement has to be set in the context of its time, when the education of the clergy bulked considerably larger than it does in the scale of values of the twentieth century. In simple, but not inaccurate, terms, education was almost wholly in the hands of the church, where it had been for the previous thousand years or so. There was no reason why the men of the late sixteenth century, of whatever ecclesiastical persuasion, should assume that that fact would greatly change - and certainly not in their own life-times. The church was far and away the most prominent provider of such education as most people could ever hope to come by; indeed, it

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H. Foreman, op. cit., (1985) 5

was the only such provider most would ever be likely to come into contact with. It is therefore misleading to imply the word 'only' before the phrase "concerned with education as it affected the clergy". By concentrating on that particular aspect, Smyth and those who shared his preoccupation were, whether consciously or not, exerting significant influence on a key area, from which repercussions would reverberate far and wide through early modern English society.

William Brewster c.1567-1644

Among the most important of the pioneering Dissenters in terms of the influence he exercised was William Brewster.²⁴ Born at Scrooby in Lincolnshire in 1567, he, like so many of his fellow Separatist leaders, enjoyed the advantage of a Cambridge education; and hardly surprisingly, in view of the numbers of like-minded men there at that time, it was at Cambridge that he absorbed Separatist ideas. After several years in the service of the English Ambassador to Holland, he returned to Scrooby in 1589 and became a leading member of the small congregation there which separated from the established church in 1606. In 1608, he migrated with the church, whose teacher was John Robinson, to Holland, and became elder

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H.M. and M. Dexter, The England and Holland of the Pilgrims (Boston, Houghton, Mifflin, Co., 1905) 253 ff.;
 C.S. Horne, op. cit., 73, 74, 77, 78, 80;
 E.A. Payne, The Free Church Tradition in the Life of England (London, SCM Press Ltd., 1944) 36-37;
 H. Davies, The English Free Churches (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1952) 54;
 R. Tudur Jones, op. cit., 21

of the congregation; he supported himself by printing Puritan books. He was one of those who advocated migration to America, and in 1620 he sailed to the New World in the 'Mayflower'. He became one of the most important members of the Plymouth colony, playing a major role in its civil and financial affairs as well as being, until 1629, the only Church Officer. He led the congregation in praise and prayer, and taught the Bible and Christian doctrine; but as he was not an ordained minister, he did not preach, or administer the sacraments. Even as brief a summary as this leaves no room for doubt as to the level, not only of Brewster's own education, but of the value he must have placed on education for the whole of the community over which he watched so assiduously during those critical first years, when it was at least as likely that the precarious undertaking would fail, as that it would succeed. In fact, however, Brewster enjoyed the satisfaction of seeing the settlement not only survive, but beginning to prosper, by the time he died in 1644.

Henry Ainsworth c.1571-1622

From the educational point of view Henry Ainsworth²⁵ was one of the most significant of the 'second wave' of Separatists. He was born in 1571 and educated at Caius College, Cambridge; but eventually, in common with many of his co-religionists, he fled to Holland when persecution of Separatists in England became too

²⁵ C.S. Horne, op. cit., 66, 68, 78;
 R.P. Stearns, op. cit., 53-54;
 R. Tudur Jones, op. cit., 19, 23, 465

intense. There he first worked as porter to a book-seller, and then became teacher to the church in Amsterdam of which Francis Johnson was minister. He drew up a confession of the faith held by the church, and was co-author with Johnson of a Defence of the Brownists. Ainsworth was a sound scholar, learned not only in Hebrew, but also in Rabbinism; this meant that he had an understanding of the living root of the language, which saved his academic knowledge from declining into arid intellectualism, cut off from its origin and the source of its vitality.

Perhaps inevitably, in the context of the accepted standards of the age in which he lived, Ainsworth was a controversialist; but he stood out from among the general run of religious polemicists of his time because of the gentleness with which he dealt with opponents and protagonists, such as Richard Bernard, John Smyth and the Roman Catholic John Ainsworth. He eventually parted company with Francis Johnson on the question of church government - Ainsworth favoured the principles of Congregational polity. He wrote Annotations on various Old Testament books - the Pentateuch, the Psalms and the Song of Solomon - which first appeared separately and then in collected form in 1627, five years after his death. The volume was subsequently reprinted, serving as both cause and effect of his very considerable reputation as a scholar. By common consent, Henry Ainsworth stands as one of the brightest lights in any evaluation of the educational standing of the early modern English Separatists. Precisely because of his pre-

eminence, he cannot be regarded as typical of their educational achievements; but he was prominent in the wider world of the scholarship of his time, as well as within the narrow confines of his sect. This indicates an attitude to education, and an appreciation of its intrinsic value, among the people to whom he was attracted, and to whom he voluntarily joined himself, despite the daunting dangers of doing so, which constitutes impressive evidence of the importance attached by Separatists to knowledge and learning, and their dissemination as widely as was possible within the constraints laid upon them by their particular circumstances.

John Robinson c.1575-1625

John Robinson²⁶ is one of the best known of the founding fathers of English Nonconformity. As with the other leaders noticed here, it could be argued that he is prominent among those of whom any records survive, because he is atypical of the majority of late Tudor and early Stuart Separatists from the established church. In fact, of course, these men had enough convictions in common with the people they led, for them to prove acceptable as leaders; it is therefore reasonable to assume that they shared the same general attitudes and underlying principles, as can be discerned in those who led them - attitudes and principles which, even if not consciously formulated, still gave identity and cohesion to the

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R. Ashton (ed.), The Works of John Robinson (London, 1851) II. 9, 15 III. 102, 337 ff.;
 W.H Burgess, John Robinson (London, Williams and Norgate, 1920);
 R.P. Stearns, op. cit., 53-54;
 R. Tudur Jones, op. cit., 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 82

group.

One of the more conspicuous facts in this survey of the early modern English Separatists is the number of their leaders who were educated at the University of Cambridge. John Robinson was no exception. The date and place of his birth are both uncertain; but he was probably born about the year 1575, either in Lincolnshire, or possibly in Nottinghamshire. He was one of those, small in number but important in significance, who after ordination to the ministry of the Church of England, professed themselves convinced by the cogency of the Separatist doctrine of the church and, in full acceptance of the likely consequences, deliberately attached themselves to Separatist congregations. After he graduated from Cambridge, in about 1598, Robinson took up a curacy at Norwich, where he soon embraced the puritan position in matters doctrinal and liturgical. His ecclesiastical pilgrimage led him steadily on from a merely reformed position, through thorough-going radicalism to the revolutionary stance of Separatism, when he became Pastor of a Separatist Church at Scrooby Manor in Nottinghamshire. He followed the same route as his fellow-believers in going into exile in Holland, where he established a church at Leyden in 1609, being ordained as Pastor there in May of that year; and from 1615 he was for a while a student at the University of Leyden.

Robinson sided with the Calvinists in the Arminian controversy. He held the Separatist view of the sacrament of Holy Communion, and advocated the Congregational doctrine of church government. He

was one of those who urged emigration to the New World on those who were being persecuted for their adherence to what they perceived as the clear teaching of Scripture on matters of faith and order; and it was from his church in Leyden that a small number of believers sailed first back to England, and then on the 'Mayflower' and her accompanying ships from Plymouth to what they themselves named Plymouth in Massachusetts, where they finally made landfall on 11 November 1620. Robinson himself stayed in Holland, but he was a profound influence on the Plymouth settlers, due to the teaching they received from him before they set sail, his tracts and letters to them in the New World, and the guidance he gave to their spiritual adviser, William Brewster. He is justly famed for his farewell sermon to the 'Pilgrim Fathers', as they have come to be known, delivered at Leyden on 21 July 1620. With the advantage of hindsight stretching back over three-and-three-quarter centuries, it is not difficult to see Robinson's ringing declamation -

"The Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth from His holy word" - as marking a watershed between the first Separatists' tendency to regard 'the faith once delivered to the saints'²⁷ as a closed system, incapable of further development, and the enlightened attitude to academic enquiry of the whole of subsequent mainstream Nonconformity. Of Robinson's own educational competence and achievements, there can, in common with his peers, be no doubt. An able controversialist, he was also

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The Epistle of Jude verse 3 (New English Bible, Oxford and Cambridge, 1961)

a productive writer; his Justification of Separation from the Church was published in 1610, his Apologia, defending the principles of Congregationalism, in 1619, and his A Defence of the Doctrine propounded by the Synod of Dort in 1624. Observations Divine and Moral, a collection of 62 essays on spiritual and moral topics, appeared just after his death in 1625.

John Robinson is however of considerably more interest for the purposes of this study than a mere recitation of his biographical details would suggest. Like John Penry and John Smyth, he wrote at some length on matters educational; but whereas the other two were more concerned with the education of the clergy, John Robinson treated the subject more generally. His fullest treatment of the topic is to be found in his New Essays: or Observations Divine and Moral. Essays I, XIV and XXIII deal with knowledge, Essays IX, X and XVI with reason, and Essay LX with the education of children. Robinson accepts the contemporary Christian assumption that knowledge of God is a prerequisite for a full and happy life. "All our wisdom to happiness consists summarily in the knowledge of God, and of ourselves".²⁸ Robinson concedes that it is not easy to determine which of the two must come first; but he judges that since it is impossible for man to come to know God of his own accord, knowledge of God must come first. Robinson stresses the role of reading and learning in this process. Foreman

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R. Ashton, op. cit., I, 76 (Essay XIV - "Of Knowledge and Ignorance")

appears to suggest that this fact reveals Robinson's affinity with general Puritan, rather than radical Separatist, thought;²⁹, but the connection is at best tenuous. Robinson distinguished six ways in which knowledge of God is acquired, namely:

- i) love of knowledge
- ii) awareness of one's own ignorance
- iii) fear of God
- iv) prayer
- v) reading, especially of the Bible and approved commentaries on it
- vi) keeping the "company and society of wise and understanding men".³⁰

Robinson argued that the very existence of the Bible is proof of God's sanction of the reading and writing of other books dealing with "all subjects, and sciences lawful". In "human writings, the truth in its kind, is taught commonly both more fully, and more simply, and more piously, than by speech".³¹ Issue could be taken with Foreman's assertion that points v) (advocating the study of commentaries on the Scriptures) and vi) (commending wise and learned men to the congregation for their edification)

were directly at variance with the radical stream of Separatist thought and one wonders if it was these radicals that Robinson had in mind in the remark,

²⁹ H. Foreman, op. cit. (1985)

³⁰ R. Ashton, op. cit., 79

³¹ Ibid., 107 (Essay XXIII - "Of Books and Writing")

'They who profit not in knowledge and wisdom by conversing with wise men, are unworthy of their company, and are worthy to keep with men and asses'.³²

The essential nature of Separatism is not delineated by one man's epistemology; Robinson was indisputably a Separatist first, and an epistemologist second, so that whatever he wrote on the theory of knowledge must be taken into account as possibly modifying "the radical stream of Separatist thought"; but he can hardly be described as being "directly at variance" with it, since, as one of the first Separatists, he was a major formulator of their stream of thought, on this particular issue, at any rate.

Robinson's educational philosophy had ideological consequences of fundamental importance, far beyond the range of the topic of its immediate concern. At bottom his thesis is that, provided the ultimate authority of God is recognised, reason must hold pride of place: the "meanest man's reason ... is to be preferred before the authority of all men". This leads inexorably to the individualism which was, and always has been, such a prominent characteristic of English religious Dissent. Foreman is surely on safer ground when he comments that

the individual [is] responsible for his religious attitude. Separatists would also have been happy with Robinson's assertion that religious truth is as superior to natural truth as the sun is to the moon, but perhaps less happy with his contention that this did not mean that reason is to be despised - 'God ... teacheth even

the most powerful and mighty men ... to prefer reason before authority'.³³

Robinson's theory of education is implicit rather than explicit in his views on the interpretation of Scripture. With radical Separatists, he held that the authority of the Bible is permanent, since it derives from God's unchangeable nature; but observation demonstrates that men's understanding of it varies according to their abilities. So, it is more likely that "a man wise, learned, and studious in the Scriptures ... should find the truth than one flighty, illiterate, and of more shallow meditations". Robinson was saddened by those who considered it "half popery, so much as to seek counsel and direction of men of learning and knowledge: lest forsooth, they should be deceived by them", because such an attitude belittled God who had given men all their abilities.³⁴ Instead, we should positively seek the company of those who are wiser than ourselves. Learning is to be valued, for "as learning makes the good better, and the bad worse, so it is more likely, that a man should be bettered by it than not".

Robinson did not dispute the radical Separatists' argument for the Holy Spirit's direct inspiration of the believer, regardless of intelligence or ability; but he did see it as working in harmony with reason and intelligence, rather than against them. He also appealed

³³ H. Foreman, op. cit. (1985) *idem*

³⁴ Ibid., 54 (Essay IX - "Of Authority and Reason")

to the parable of the talents³⁵ to support his contention that although all men are created by God and are therefore to that extent equal in His sight, yet He has nevertheless given them gifts, including reason, intelligence and learning, to different degrees and the person endowed with more talents would, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, be used to a greater degree in God's service than the person with fewer talents. There is precious little evidence here of the 'democracy' which a surprising number of writers unacquainted with the ethos of English religious Dissent, have professed to discern in its ideology. Foreman is right when he points out³⁶ that Robinson cannot escape the charge of elitism, although he concedes that Robinson would have thought of it as an elitism of responsibility and service, rather than of privilege. Robinson poses the interesting rhetorical question, "Now who would not strive to excel other men in that wherein men excel all other creatures?" - interesting, because it suggests a realistic acceptance of the strong natural human instinct to compete with, and outshine, one's fellows.³⁷

Is there any evidence of dissension, as Foreman avers there is in Essay XVI ("Of Wisdom and Folly"), between Robinson and people whom Foreman characterises as 'the radical Separatists', on the

³⁵ The Gospel According to Matthew chapter 25 verses 14-30 (New English Bible, Oxford and Cambridge, 1961)

³⁶ H. Foreman, op. cit., (1985) 7

³⁷ R. Ashton, op. cit., 67 (Essay X - "Of Faith, Hope and Love")

issue of reason? Foreman maintains that both would have agreed that knowledge, whether religious or secular, comes through experience;

but whereas it would seem from some of their writings that they were prepared to accept the experience as sufficient justification in itself for arriving at some conclusion or belief, Robinson was saying that experience must be weighed against reason to see whether such conclusion or belief was justified or not. Reason, therefore, acted as a safeguard against basing one's standpoint solely on an emotional experience.³⁸

The comment which must be made here is that Foreman has formulated with exquisite precision exactly that characteristic of classical English Nonconformity which places Robinson squarely in the Separatist, rather than the conforming Puritan, camp - namely, the disinclination to accept experience alone, and more especially the emotional experience which so frequently characterises manifestations of religious belief, as an adequate foundation on which to base convictions which will stand up to the cold scrutiny of reason. Although he does not utilise the terms, Robinson is firmly in the vanguard of the classical Dissenting appeal to the co-equal and undivided trinity of the Bible, as mediated by the Spirit, to the conscience of the individual, as the authority by which to measure and evaluate experience, rather than the dichotomy between Scripture and tradition (even though the latter be restricted to the first four Christian centuries), which became, and has

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H. Foreman, op. cit., (1985) 8

remained, the criterion for Anglican validation of religious experience.

William Greenhill c.1591-1671

In a study such as this, embracing people of more than one generation span, it is important to bear in mind that organic development of thought is only to be expected as a result of the mere passage of time. With William Greenhill³⁹ there opens up the period in which the Separatists made their own distinctive contribution to the development of Dissenting thought in matters educational, as well as theological and ecclesiastical.

The civil war and the subsequent political dominance of the Long Parliament and the New Model Army ... had an especially dramatic impact on the position of Nonconformists, for many of those who had faced harassment and persecution in the pre-1640 period now found themselves part of the new ecclesiastical status quo.⁴⁰

Greenhill was a Congregational Minister of some very considerable intellectual stature - he matriculated at the University of Oxford at the age of 13, and graduated when he was still only 17 years old. From 1613 to 1631 he held the (Anglican) living of New Shoreham

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W.A. Shaw, History of the English Church 1640-1660 2 vols., (London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1900) II, 300; C.H. Firth (ed.), The Clarke Papers (London, Royal Historical Society, 1901) IV, 81-82, 184-186; C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum 2 vols., (London, HMSO, 1911) II, 856 ff.; G.L. Turner, Original Records of Early Nonconformity 3 vols., (London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1911-1914) I, 69; R. Tudur Jones, op. cit., 28, 29, 31, 35, 43, 44, 48, 55, 80, 101

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S. Doran and C. Durston, op. cit., 112

in Sussex, where his pastoral gifts and dedication were highly spoken of. He became the afternoon preacher ('the Evening Star') to the congregation at Stepney which was ministered to in the morning by Jeremy Burroughs ('the Morning Star'). At the Westminster Assembly (1 July 1643 to 22 February 1649) he opposed the Presbyterian party, and in 1644 became the first Pastor of the Congregational Church in Stepney. The first volume of his 4-volume commentary on Ezekiel was dedicated to a daughter of Charles I, and after the king's execution he became chaplain to three of his children; but he also found favour with Oliver Cromwell, and was made one of the 'Triers' for the approbation of public preachers. Greenhill was ejected from his vicarage of St. Dunstan's-in-the-East in 1660, but he remained Pastor of the Congregational Church until his death. He is of primary interest for the purposes of this study because of his commentary on Ezekiel, publication of which was completed by 1662. It was described as being "full of erudition and practical wisdom".

John Goodwin 1594-1665

John Goodwin⁴¹ was educated at Queens' College, Cambridge,

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Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, 3rd Series X (1849) 42;
 A.G. Matthews, Calamy Revised, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1934);
 W. Haller, Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution 3 vols., (New York, Columbia University Press, 1934) III, 1 ff.;
 R.P. Stearns, op. cit., 204-206, 398-399;
 R. Tudur Jones, op. cit., 24, 25, 26, 31, 49, 51, 52, 465

where he also became a Fellow. From 1625 to 1633 he was Rector of East Rainham in Norfolk, and then became Vicar of St. Stephen's, Coleman Street, in London. He was nominated to membership of the Westminster Assembly, but did not in fact attend. He was however a keen supporter of Parliament against the king in the Civil Wars, and gained a reputation as a leading Republican thinker and advocate of religious toleration - in the 1640's, he went so far as to attack the Presbyterians as a persecuting party. In about 1644 he formed a Gathered Church in his parish, and was removed from his vicarage for a brief period. He was also one of the very few Independents who held Arminian theological views, a fact which embroiled him in much controversy. He opposed Cromwell's national church, and printed his opinions about the Triers in 'Basaoistai, or The Triers (or Tormentors) Tried', which was published in 1657. Although Goodwin was one of those exempted from Charles II's Act of General Pardon in 1660, he was not executed, but died in 1665.

Philip Nye 1596-1672

Philip Nye⁴² was a Congregational Minister and theologian. Born in

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M. Sylvester, Reliquiae Baxterianae (1696) I, 103. III, 46;
 E. Calamy, An Account of the Ministers, Lecturers, Masters and Fellows of Colleges, and Schoolmasters who were Ejected or Silenced after the Restoration in 1660 2nd edition (1713) II, 30;
 D. Neal, History of the Puritans (ed. E. Parsons) 2 vols., (London, no date but 1811) II, 462;
 C.H. Firth (ed.), op. cit., IV, 81-82, 184-186;
 C.H. Firth, The Last Years of the Protectorate 1656-1658 2 vols., (London, Longmans & Co., 1909) 133-134;
 C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, op. cit., II, 856 ff.;
 J. Willcock, Life of Sir Henry Vane the Younger

Sussex, he entered the ministry after education at, and graduation from, Oxford. By 1630, he was in possession of the living of St. Michael's, Cornhill, in the City of London; but he fled to Holland in 1633 to escape from Laudian authoritarianism. After his subsequent return to England he became in 1640 Minister of the Congregational Church at Kimbolton in Huntingdonshire. In June 1643, he was appointed a member of the Westminster Assembly, where, in company with Thomas Goodwin, Sidrach Simpson, William Bridge and Jeremy Burroughes, he became one of the Five Dissenting Brethren (while subscribing with small exceptions to the doctrinal Calvinism of their fellow divines, they stoutly championed the Congregational Church polity against the Presbyterian form of ecclesiastical government which was favoured by the overwhelming majority - 152 out of a total of 157). Nye was active in Cromwell's Protectorate, and was a leading light in the Savoy Assembly of 1658, which was the Congregational riposte to the Presbyterian Westminster Assembly - and which, incidentally, represented the high-water mark of Congregational influence on English national life. Deprived of his living at the Restoration in 1660, Nye ministered privately among Dissenting churches in his latter years, until his death in 1672.

(London, Saint Catherine Press, 1913) 122-123;
Congregational Historical Society Transactions IX
 (1924-1926) 22-26;
 A.G. Matthews, op. cit., 369;
 G.F. Nuttall, Visible Saints (Oxford, Basil Blackwell,
 1957);
 R. Tudur Jones, op. cit., Introduction and chapters 1,
 2, 3 *passim*, 465

Jeremy Burroughes ?-1646

Jeremy Burroughes⁴³ has already been mentioned as one of the Five Dissenting Brethren at the Westminster Assembly, 1643-1649. Educated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, he began his ministry as assistant to Edmund Calamy at Bury St. Edmunds, in Suffolk. In 1631, he became Rector of Tivetshall, in Norfolk, but was suspended after Bishop Wren's visitation in 1636. He then went to Rotterdam, and became teacher to the English Congregational Church there, whose pastor was William Bridge. Returning to England in 1641, he gained fame as lecturer at Stepney and Cripplegate, and it was he who presented the 'Apologeticall Narration' to Parliament in 1644. Notwithstanding his firm refusal to allow powers of coercion to Presbyterian 'classes', Burroughes was in fact of a very peaceable disposition, and was noted for his constant striving for unity among the divines at the Westminster Assembly; but he died in 1646, before the Assembly had completed its deliberations.

William Bridge 1600-1671

William Bridge⁴⁴ was born in Cambridgeshire and was educated at

⁴³ W.A. Shaw, op. cit., II, 300;
C.S. Horne, op. cit., 113-121;
R.P. Stearns, op. cit., 204-206;
R. Tudur Jones, op. cit., 23, 25, 28, 29

⁴⁴ Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series (1667-1668) 186, 277 (1668-1669) 159-160;
J. Browne, The History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk (London, Jarrold & Sons, 1877) 208-210, 233;
C.H. Firth (ed.), The Clarke Papers (London, Royal Historical Society, 1901) IV, 184-186;

Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he also became a Fellow. He served several churches in Essex and Norfolk as lecturer, but was deprived in 1636 by the Bishop of Norwich. He migrated to Holland where he renounced episcopal ordination and became teacher to a Gathered Church in Rotterdam. On his return to England he was appointed Town Preacher at Yarmouth in Norfolk and pastor of the Congregational Church there. He accepted nomination to serve in the Westminster Assembly, but in fact became one of the Five Dissenting Brethren. He also attended the Savoy Assembly in 1658. Although he was universally acknowledged to be a great preacher, Bridge was deprived of his Yarmouth post in 1661, as part of the Restoration reaction in the religious sphere to the dominance of the Independents during the Commonwealth and Protectorate. He then went to live in or near London, but he returned to Yarmouth in 1667 or 1668 to preach in Dissenting Conventicles. He died in East Anglia in 1671. Most of his printed works were comprised of his sermons.

Thomas Goodwin 1600-1680

Born in the same year as William Bridge was Thomas Goodwin.⁴⁵

G.L. Turner, op. cit., I, 104
 C.S. Horne, op. cit., 113-121
 A.G. Matthews, op. cit.
 G.F. Nuttall, op. cit.
 R. Tudur Jones, op. cit., 23, 24, 28, 32, 35, 44, 46, 57, 75, 101, 457

⁴⁵ Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series (1670) 243;
 G. Vernon, A Letter to a Friend Concerning some of Dr. Owen's Principles and Practices (1670) 4, 34;
 R. Halley, "Memoir of Thomas Goodwin, D.D." in The Works of Thomas Goodwin, D.D. (Edinburgh, Nichol's

Like so many of the Separatist leaders prominent enough to be noticed, Goodwin hailed from eastern England, in his case from Norfolk; and he too was educated at Cambridge, where he became a Fellow of St. Catherine's College, and Vicar of Holy Trinity Church. In 1634, however, he became a Congregationalist, resigned his living, and moved to London. Again in common with so many of his fellow Dissenters, he was forced by persecution to migrate to Holland in 1639, where he briefly served as Pastor to a church at Arnheim. He was however able to return to London in 1640, where he formed a Gathered Church. Nominated a member of the Westminster Assembly, he became the leader of the Five Dissenting Brethren. During the brief period of the ascendancy of the Independents in the 1640's and 1650's -

Despite the hostility of [the] new Presbyterian establishment, the war years ... saw some considerable expansion in the numbers of Baptist and

Standard Divines, Puritan Period, 1861) xxxvii-xxxviii, II xxxii, xxxiii, XI 403;
Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, 4th Series, VIII (1868) 208;
 C.H. Firth (ed.), The Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow (Oxford, 1894) II, 43;
 C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, op. cit., 856 ff.;
 G.L. Turner, "Williamson's Spy Book" in Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society V, 247, 251, 258, 314;
Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society IX (1924-1926) 22-26;
 C.S. Horne, op. cit., 113, 121, 151, 173;
 A.G. Matthews, op. cit., 12, 51;
 H. Davies, op. cit., 10, 75, 77, 81, 82, 114;
 R.P. Stearns, op. cit., 407;
 G. Davies, The Restoration of Charles II (San Marino, Huntington Library, 1955) 4, 49-50;
 G.F. Nuttall, op. cit.;
 R. Tudur Jones, op. cit., Introduction and chapters 1 and 2 passim, 457, 465

Independent gathered churches, both in the capital and elsewhere. It is important to remember, however, that ... the total membership of all these churches never amounted to more than about 7 per cent of the population.⁴⁶

Goodwin, as one of their most prominent men, occupied some of the most influential positions in the land. In 1649 he was appointed chaplain to the Council of State which assumed responsibility for the exercise of executive power after the execution of Charles I; and in 1650 he became President of Magdalen College, Oxford. In this capacity, he became a leading member of the Board of Visitors in the University, and also of Cromwell's Triers - indeed, he enjoyed the confidence of Cromwell himself from 1656 until the latter's death in 1658. Goodwin's prominence was also in evidence in his membership of the Savoy Assembly of Congregational Elders in 1658; he was held in high esteem among the Gathered Churches in England, becoming Pastor of one such Church in the City of London after the Restoration. He died in 1680, and his works were published posthumously between 1682 and 1704 in five folio volumes. Calvinistic in outlook, they include devotional, expository, doctrinal and ecclesiastical studies, and have often been reprinted.

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S. Doran and C. Durston, op. cit., 113

Thomas Brooks 1608-1680

Thomas Brooks⁴⁷ died in the same year as Thomas Goodwin, though he was his junior by eight years, having been born in 1608 into a Puritan family. He also enjoyed the advantage of an education at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, the educational foundation most favoured by Puritans and Dissenters alike. He soon became a Congregationalist, and served as a chaplain in the first Civil War. In 1648 he accepted the Rectory of St. Margaret, New Fish Street, in London, but only after making his Congregational principles clear to the Vestry. On several occasions he preached before Parliament, but although he was ejected in 1660, he remained in London as a Nonconformist preacher - government spies reported that he preached at Tower Wharf and in Moorfields. He remained in London throughout both the Great Plague of 1665 and the Great Fire in 1666, and in 1672 he was granted a licence to preach in Lime Street. He is known to have written over a dozen books, most of which are devotional in character.

John Owen 1616-1683

John Owen⁴⁸ was educated at Queen's College, Oxford, until he

⁴⁷ G. Vernon, op. cit., 34
C.H. Firth (ed.), op. cit., IV, 81-82
R. Tudur Jones, op. cit., 43, 47, 48, 55, 72

⁴⁸ References to John Owen are numerous, and not all of them are relevant to the purpose of this study. Many that are significant may be traced through the bibliography, index and footnotes in R. Tudur Jones, Congregationalism in England 1662-1962 (London, Independent Press Ltd., 1962) Introduction and

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read a book by John Cotton which convinced him of the Biblical nature of the Congregational way. In his next parish, at Coggeshall, he formed a Gathered Church in 1647; and not unexpectedly, his sympathies in the Civil War were wholly with the Parliamentary cause. He accompanied Oliver Cromwell as his chaplain on expeditions to Ireland and Scotland between 1649 and 1651; he was made Dean of Christ Church, Oxford in 1651, and in 1652 enjoyed the gratification of returning as Vice-Chancellor to the University which he had been forced to leave only 15 years previously. He held the post until 1657. He sat in Parliament for a short time in 1654, and was also one of Cromwell's Triers. He was influential in national affairs throughout the period of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, sitting on many committees, and being in effect the chief architect of Cromwell's state church. As one of the most prominent men at the Savoy Conference in 1658, Owen exercised significant influence on the drawing up of the Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order, the classic exposition of seventeenth century Congregationalism. Throughout the whole of his nine years (1651-1660) in a position of leadership at Oxford, Owen devoted his energies to the production of 'godly and learned' men, and to the reform of the statutes and ceremonies of the university. A voluminous author, he wrote against Arminian and Socinian views, and was often in controversy with Richard Baxter and assorted Anglicans, but was by general consent always considered to be tolerant and fair; many of his writings show deep spiritual insight, and a firm grasp of New Testament Christianity.

Owen was ejected from Christ Church at the Restoration in 1660, and at first sought refuge at Stadhampton, the village of his youth, where he gathered a church in his own home. For the next twenty-three years, until his death in 1683, Owen was an acknowledged leader of the English Protestant Nonconformists. He became Pastor of a church in London, and friend and mentor to many of the ejected clergy. He was an assiduous defender of the legal rights of Dissenters, an eloquent expositor of the Congregational way, a learned Biblical commentator, and a sensitive devotional writer. His books were treasured by his fellow Nonconformists, and have constantly been reprinted. He was buried in Bunhill Fields in London, where so many other distinguished Dissenting leaders have also been interred. At this point it is illuminating to set these individual studies in the context of a recent assessment of the significance of the Separatist phenomenon at this stage of its development. Doran and Durston write:

Although the numbers of Nonconformists remained relatively small, their staunch commitment to their faith and persistent refusal to bow to the pressure of persecution meant that it was impossible to destroy them ... Educated lay opinion grew increasingly hostile to the coercion of Dissenters, who were often now respectable and law-abiding members of the community ... With the passing of the Toleration Act of 1689, Separatism finally achieved its objective and Nonconformists were given the right to go their own way outside the established church.⁴⁹

Conclusions drawn from incomplete statistics must be regarded as tentative and qualified. The same caveat must apply to samples, over the selection of which the would-be statistician has been unable to exercise any control. By no means can the evidence available to the historian of early modern English religious Dissent be said to have been 'selected'. The survival of such evidence can only be regarded at best as providential, and in most cases as the result of the operation of wholly random factors, subject to nothing even remotely resembling logical or scientific principles. Historians therefore have a choice; either they may decline to draw any conclusions at all from the evidence available to them, on the grounds that it is likely to be so unrepresentative as to render any such conclusions invalid; or they may choose to work with whatever material they can gain access to, always bearing in mind that incomplete or imperfect records will certainly distort, to an extent of which they can never be aware, whatever judgements they make on the basis of these records.

This, of course, is the case with the subject matter of this thesis; but although the evidence from the second half of the sixteenth century is scanty, it grows in volume through the first half of the seventeenth century to the point where the limitations outlined above become less constraining, and it is possible to infer generalisations which one can be confident will not prove to be misleading.

The following table sets out headings which are relevant for my purposes, under which to assess the significance in the field of education of 17 leading Separatists who came to maturity during the period of this study, and for whom sufficient relevant evidence survives.

ANALYSIS FROM THE EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF LEADING SECOND WAVE SEPARATISTS

Name	Dates	Birth place	Family Background	Education	Work Experience	Known writings
John Greenwood	? -1593			Corpus Christi College, Cambridge	Chaplain in the Essex home of Lord Robert Rich. Moved to London, criticised the idea of a state church and separated from it. 1586 - arrested for holding an illegal conventicle, Examined by Archbishop Whitgift 1592 - released - formed a church with Francis Johnson, which migrated to Holland - the "ancient church". Arrested, charged with Barrow with writing & publishing seditious books. Hanged at Tyburn.	Co-author with Barrow and Penry of tracts defending Separatism (some printed in Holland).
Thomas Helwys	c.1550-1616	Nottinghamshire		Studied at Gray's Inn	Pastor of a Baptist Church in Amsterdam - 1610. Established a Baptist Church in Pinners' Hall, Newgate Street, London - 1611	1."Declaration of Faith" 2."Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity" - 1611 or 1612
John Penry	c.1559-1593	Brecknockshire		Graduated at both Cambridge and Oxford	Open-air preacher in Wales Hanged at Southwark.	1."The Aequity of an Humble Supplication" - 1587

Name	Dates	Birth place	Family Background	Education	Work Experience	Known writings
John Udall	c.1560-1592		Influential aristocratic friends, e.g. the Countess of Warwick and Sir Walter Raleigh	Christ's College Cambridge - matriculated 1578 Trinity College	Curate at Kingston-upon-Thames - 1588. Minister at Newcastle-upon-Tyne	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Possibly "A Demonstration of the Truth of that Discipline which Christ hath prescribed for the government of His Church" (published anonymously) - 1588 2. Possibly "The State of the Church of England" (published anonymously) - 1588 3. "Commentary upon the Lamentations of Jeremy" (published posthumously) 4. Polemical works 5. Several volumes of sermons e.g. "Amendment of Life" - 1584; "The True Remedy against Famine and Wars" - 1588. "The combat between Christ and the Devil" - 1588 6. "Key to the Holy Tongue" (Hebrew Grammar and Dictionary) - 1593 (posthumously, in Leyden).
Francis Johnson	1561-?		May 1593 - presented petitions from prison to the Lord Mayor of London and the Privy Council. June 1592 (twice) and January 1594 wrote to Lord Burghley.		Pastor of the Separatist Church in Southwark September 1592. Arrested December 1592.	

Name	Dates	Birth place	Family Background	Education	Work Experience	Known writings
John Smyth	c.1567-1612	Eastern England		Fellow of Christ's College Cambridge	Ordained Anglican Minister. Lecturer at Lincoln Cathedral 1600. Dismissed for "personal preaching" - 1602 Migrated to Amsterdam - 1607 Formed Baptist Church there.	1."A True Description out of the Word of God of the Visible Church" - 1589 2."A Patterne of True Prayer" - 1605 3."The Differences of the Churches of the Separation" - 1608.
William Brewster	c.1567-1644	Scrooby, Lincolnshire		Cambridge	In the service of the English Ambassador to Holland for several years. Returned to Scrooby - 1589. Leading Member of Separatist Church formed there in 1606. Migrated to Holland - 1608. Printed Puritan books. Sailed to America in the 'Mayflower' - 1620. Prominent member of the Plymouth Colony.	
Henry Ainsworth	c.1571-1622			Caius College Cambridge	Fled to Holland - porter to a book-seller, then teacher to the Separatist Church in Amsterdam.	1.(With Francis Johnson) - "Defence" (of the Brownists) 2."Annotations" of various Old Testament books - in collected form in 1627.

Name	Dates	Birth place	Family Background	Education	Work Experience	Known writings
John Robinson	c.1575-1625	Lincolnshire or Nottinghamshire		Cambridge - graduated c. 1598	Ordained Anglican Minister. Curate at Norwich. Pastor of the Separatist Church at Scrooby Manor in Nottinghamshire. Migrated to Holland - established a church at Leyden - 1609, from where a small number sailed back to England and then on the "Mayflower" to the New World, though Robinson stayed in Holland.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Justification of Separation from the Church" - 1610 2. "Apologia" (for Congregationalism) - 1619 3. "A Defence of the Doctrine propounded by the Synod of Dort" - 1624 4. "Observations Divine and Moral" - 1625.
William Greenhill	c.1591-1671			Oxford - matriculated at 13, graduated at 17	Congregational Minister at New Shoreham - 1613 to 1631. "Afternoon Preacher" to the church at Stepney - became first pastor there in 1644. Chaplain to 3 of Charles I's children after 1649. One of Cromwell's "Triers" of preachers. Ejected from St. Dunstan-in-the-East 1660.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 4-volume commentary on Ezekiel (dedicated to a daughter of Charles I) publication completed by 1662.

Name	Dates	Birth place	Family Background	Education	Work Experience	Known writings
John Goodwin	1594-1665			Cambridge - Queen's College (also Fellow)	Rector of East Rainham in Norfolk 1625-1633. Vicar of St. Stephen's Coleman Street, London. Nominated to Westminster Assembly, but did not attend. Leading republican thinker and advocate of religious toleration - attacked the Presbyterians as a persecuting party. Formed a Gathered Church in 1644 - briefly ejected from his parish. Held Arminian views. Opposed Cromwell's national church.	1."Basaoistai or The Triers (or Tormentors) Tried", 1657.
Philip Nye	1596-1672	Sussex		Oxford graduate	Congregational Minister and theologian. At St. Michael's Cornhill by 1630. Fled to Holland in 1633. Minister at Kimbolton, Huntingdonshire - 1640. One of the 5 Dissenting Brethren at the Westminster Assembly 1643-1649. Member of the Savoy Assembly 1658. Deprived in 1660.	

Name	Dates	Birth place	Family Background	Education	Work Experience	Known writings
Jeremy Burroughes	d.1646			Cambridge - Emmanuel College	One of the 5 Dissenting Brethren at the Westminster Assembly, 1643-1649. Assistant to Edmund Calamy at Bury St. Edmunds Suffolk. Rector of Tivetshall, Norfolk 1631; suspended 1636. Teacher to the English Congregational Church in Rotterdam (Pastor William Bridge). Lecturer at Stepney & Cripplegate. Presented 'Apologeticall Narrative' to Parliament - 1644.	
William Bridge	1600-1671	Cambridgeshire		Cambridge - Emmanuel College (also Fellow)	Lecturer to several churches in Essex & Norfolk. Deprived 1636. Migrated to Holland. Town Preacher of Yarmouth, Norfolk & Pastor of the Congregational Church. Deprived 1661. One of the 5 Dissenting Brethren at the Westminster Assembly. Member of the Savoy Assembly, 1658.	Printed sermons

Name	Dates	Birth place	Family Background	Education	Work Experience	Known writings
Thomas Goodwin	1600-1680	Norfolk		Cambridge, Fellow of St. Catherine's College	Vicar of Holy Trinity, Cambridge. Resigned and became a Congregationalist in 1634. Moved to London. Migrated to Holland - 1639. Formed a Gathered Church in London - 1640. Member of the Westminster Assembly - leader of the 5 Dissenting Brethren. Chaplain to the Council of State 1649. President of Magdalen College, Oxford, Member of the University Board of Visitors and of Cromwell's Triers & of the Savoy Assembly, 1658. Pastor of a Gathered Church in London after 1660.	5 volumes of Calvinistic devotional, expository, doctrinal and ecclesiastical studies, published posthumously, 1682-1704.
Thomas Brooks	1608-1680			Cambridge - Emmanuel College	Congregational Chaplain in first Civil War. Rector of St. Margaret, New Fish Street, London, 1648. Several times preached before Parliament. Ejected 1660, but reported by government spies as preaching at Tower Wharf and in Moorfields. Licensed to preach in Lime Street in 1672.	Over a dozen books, mostly devotional.

Name	Dates	Birth place	Family Background	Education	Work Experience	Known writings
John Owen	1616-1683	Stadhampton		Queen's College Oxford	Held Anglican livings at Fordham Essex, 1643 and Coggeshall - formed a Gathered Church. Chaplain to Cromwell on expedi- tions to Ireland & Scotland between 1649 & 1651. Dean of Xt. Ch. Oxford 1651 - Vice Chancellor, 1652-57. In Parliament in 1654. One of Cromwell's Triers. Chief Architect of Cromwell's State Church. Prominent at Savoy Conference 1658. Reformed Oxford statutes and ceremonies. Ejected from Christ Church 1660. Formed Gathered Church at Stadhampton. Pastor of Church in London.	

This table, together with that on page 219 of chapter 3, yields the following summary information:

1. The area of birth of 11 of the 20 is known:

Norfolk	3	Lincolnshire	2/1
Nottinghamshire	1/2	Brecknockshire	1
Cambridgeshire	1	"Eastern England"	1
Rutland	1	Sussex	1

First comments about the geographical distribution of Separatist ideas could include the observation that with the exclusion of the 'rogue' counties of Brecknockshire, and possibly Sussex, the birth-places of nearly 50% (9 out of 20) of the sample available to us are in Eastern England. Likely explanations for this concentration are not of primary interest for this present work, although they have been briefly referred to at the start of this chapter, and again below.

2. The educational processes to which 19 of the 20 were subjected are known - only Francis Johnson yields no information on this score. The overwhelming predominance of the University of Cambridge is immediately obvious. Two leaders, Robert Harrison and John Udall, benefited from association with 2 Cambridge colleges; the University of Oxford produced only three Separatist leaders (William Greenhill, Philip Nye and John Owen), although John Penry enjoyed the rare privilege of graduation at both universities. Two (Henry Barrow and Thomas Helwys) also studied at Gray's Inn. The distribution among the Cambridge colleges

of the 15 Separatists who attended that university was as follows:

Corpus Christi	3	Clare Hall	1
Emmanuel	3	Queens'	1
Christ's	2	St. Catherine's	1
Caius	1	St. John's	1
		Trinity	1

(The colleges of which John Penry, John Robinson and William Brewster were members are not recorded).

The question inevitably arises as to whether Cambridge became a stronghold of Puritan and Separatist ideas because those who already held such views gravitated towards a centre where they knew they would enjoy the company of like-minded people; or whether they became convinced Puritans or Separatists as a result of coming under the influence of an institution which, largely for geographical reasons, had become a centre for the reception and dissemination of radical religious ideas. In all probability, the answer to the question lies in an amalgamation of the two alternatives outlined above. The most likely explanation of this development would then be along the lines of:

- (a) the radical religious revisionism of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and other continental reformers was carried along already existing trade routes from Europe to the nearest areas of the British Isles, i.e., the South-East, London and East Anglia;
- (b) young men in Eastern England seeking a university

education would be more likely to look to Cambridge, in their own part of the country, than to Oxford, considerably further over to the west;

- (c) the congruence of the two factors resulted in the University of Cambridge becoming, for largely geographical reasons, simultaneously a repository for new ideas from overseas, and a magnet for would-be students from the eastern half of England who there received and absorbed those new ideas, and then became their active propagators.

3. A less comprehensive picture emerges from consideration of the family backgrounds of these 20 Separatist leaders. Only four of them were sufficiently highly-placed on the social scale to prove interesting enough to comment on; two of them for having family connections with Lord Burghley, one for having influential aristocratic friends, and one for having sufficient social clout to have a reasonable expectation of replies to his letters to the Lord Mayor of London, the Privy Council, and Lord Burghley.
4. A summary of the work experience of the subjects of this survey will obviously produce a one-sided picture, since each of them is of significance as a religious leader. Thus, ten of the 20 are specifically described as Pastor or Minister of Gathered or Separatist churches, seven are noted as having formed such churches, and five were chaplains (one to a

nobleman, a second to Parliamentary forces during the First Civil War, a third to three of Charles I's children after the latter's execution in 1649, a fourth to the Council of State in 1649, and the fifth to Oliver Cromwell). One was an open-air preacher in Wales; only two schoolmasters figure among the recorded occupations, but a further two are described as teachers to a church or congregation - "Teacher" was of course a specific church office in early modern English Separatism, claiming justification from the New Testament, and in no way to be confused with Preacher, or Pastor/Minister. John Owen reached the heights of academe as the administrative head of the University of Oxford and there is mention of a Master of the Old Men's Hospital at Norwich, a lecturer at Lincoln Cathedral, a servant of the English Ambassador to Holland, a porter, a book-seller, a writer of books, a printer of books, a publisher of books, a Town Preacher at Yarmouth in Norfolk, and a (government) licensed preacher at Lime Street. (The totals come to more than 20 because many of the 20 are known to have had experience of more than one kind of work in the course of their careers).

5. Known writings of the 20 Separatist leaders number well over 50. They cover the full range of topics on which religious leaders might be expected to write, from polemical pamphlets to works of spiritual devotion, from learned

expositions of Scripture to popular commentaries on the Bible, and of course, letters. There are extant translations, grammars, dictionaries, catechisms, tracts, declarations of faith, petitions, sermons, apologiae, and works of philosophy and theology. Some of them have become classics of the Christian Church, being reprinted many times during and after their authors' lives; indeed, a few were still being republished in the second half of the twentieth century, more than 300 years after they were first written. They constitute a silent but eloquent and lasting testimonial to the intellectual capacities of the men who emerged to lead the new religious movement in late Tudor and early Stuart England, and lead it so well that it developed into an important, indeed, a unique strand in the fabric of national life for the next three centuries.

CHAPTER 5**CASE STUDIES OF INDIVIDUAL PRISONERS**

Brief reference has already been made to indications of the number of Separatists in late sixteenth-century London. It was of course only a small part of Elizabeth's realm, but it was far and away the most significant centre in the country, socially and culturally, as well as politically and economically. Commerce with continental Europe, and particularly the Low Countries and northern Germany, provided opportunities for the transmission of ideas, as well as goods; and manufacturers and traders were strongly represented in the capital and, although to a lesser extent, in south-east England. There can be little doubt that they and their contacts were the chief means by which the thought and teaching of Luther and Calvin, and those who followed after them, were brought from mainland Europe to the British Isles. These people were the entrepreneurs and capitalists of the period, a fact which may partly account for their tendency to be Puritans, remaining, albeit with varying degrees of discontent, in Elizabeth's state church.

The social basis of religious nonconformity is of course a well-researched area; but the significance of the conclusions drawn in this chapter stems from the fact that whereas the status and achievements of non-separating Puritans are known largely through the theological writings of their intellectually elite, the social origins and educational standards of grass-roots Separatists can be ascertained because they were criminalised, and brought to trial, a

process which was applied to more than just their elite. Using evidence of literacy from depositions has the added advantage of applying the same methodology as that employed by recent investigators in this area, notably, of course, David Cressy.¹ Analysis of the available evidence as to the social origins of the first English Separatists demonstrates that some of them came from professional, and many of them from artisan, as well as labouring, socio-economic groups; Doran and Durston comment that "Gathered churches appear to have been peopled largely by small, independent craftsmen and their families."² What is of interest is the fact that the Separatists of whom records have survived are almost all located in social strata below those in which the majority of Puritans are typically found.

One of the primary sources of information about the Separatists is the record of the examinations which some of them underwent at the hands of the officers and agents of the Anglican Church in March and April 1593. An account of the interrogations of 52 Separatists was printed for the Sir Halley Stewart Trust in 1970.³ Of the 52, only one was a woman. The occupations of two of them (John Edwardes and Robert Stokes) are not recorded; those

¹ D. Cressy, Literacy and the Social Order (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980) et al.

² S. Doran and C. Durston, Princes, Pastors and People: The Church and Religion in England, 1529-1689 (London and New York, Routledge, 1991) 110

³ L.H. Carlson (ed.) The Writings of John Greenwood and Henry Barrow 1591-1593 Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts VI (London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970) 292-391

of the remaining 50 may be categorised for my purposes as professional, skilled, trader and unskilled. The largest of these groupings is the skilled category - 29 individuals (57% of the total) are recorded as engaged in the following occupations: shipwright (5), tailor (4), purse-maker (3), shoe-maker (3), weaver (2), carpenter, cloth-worker, coppersmith, farmer, felt-maker, glover, goldsmith, joiner, leather-dresser, trunk-maker, turner, and worker of caps (1 each). The next largest category is the professional grouping; 13 examiners (25% of the total i.e. fewer than half the number of those in the skilled category) are recorded as being clergyman (4), schoolmaster (2), scrivener (2), apothecary, lawyer, physician (and Master of Arts), scholar and writer (1 each). Seven traders (12% of the total) worked as fishmonger (3), haberdasher (3) and draper (1). Two (4% of the total) are described only as servant and widow, which is of course a classification of status rather than occupational skills. It should however be noted that some of the examiners are described as being servant to another person as well as having their own occupation.

The criterion which has been utilised in this analysis of the Separatist prisoners in London gaols in 1593 is at root an educational one; so the definition of the term 'education' for the purpose of this thesis has a bearing on the significance of the findings of this study. The importance or otherwise of education for any person or group of persons is likely to be conditioned, at any rate, initially, by their experience, or lack of it, of education in

their formative years - say up to the mid-teen years, 15 or thereabouts. It is not, however, possible to suggest a common view of, or attitude to, education, even in a group as small as the 52 under consideration here, since education was not the common interest which brought this or any other group of Separatists together in the first place; it would be seriously misleading to work on the assumption that 'education' meant the same to the widow Katherin Unwin as it did to the schoolmaster William Denford, or the schoolteacher George Johnson. It will therefore be necessary to notice every reference to education in the records of the examinations of these 52 Separatists.

They had been arrested on different occasions and under different pretexts, and had been imprisoned for varying lengths of time; but the underlying reason for the severe persecution to which they were subjected in the late 1580's and early 1590's may be summarised as the apparently final removal of the threat of Spanish, and therefore of Roman Catholic, domination with the defeat of the Armada in 1588, and the successful containment of the Roman Catholic fifth column in England in the form of the Jesuit mission staffed by English priests trained mainly in the college at Douai, and in Rome. These successes enabled Elizabeth's ministers, having been relieved of the threat from the ecclesiastical right, to concentrate their attention upon the pin-pricks they were increasingly aware of from the ecclesiastical left - i.e., those few hundred or so radical puritans who stubbornly refused to

compromise their consciences by conforming to Elizabeth's state church. Most unfortunately for them, the reduction of the external threat to the English body politic was immediately followed by the publication, in 1588 and 1589, of the Marprelate Tracts, those sometimes scurrilous but always telling indictments of the Anglican via media whose authorship has still not been definitively resolved, though the Separatist John Penry was one of the prime suspects in the eyes of the authorities. It seems likely that the chief concern of Elizabeth's ministers was with the fact that an unlicensed printing press could operate with impunity, and apparently move about the country undetected, rather than with the actual content of the Tracts; even allowing for the vigorous standards of accusation and abuse which were acceptable at the time, the Tracts probably spoilt their case by over-statement. Be that as it may, the periodic appearance of these publications over a period of 18 months to two years seems to have concentrated the hostile interest of the ecclesiastical and political powers in the tiny but irritating focus of dissent represented by the Separatists.

The immediate cause of the arrests and interrogations of March and April 1593 was the cheeky but dangerous escapade of Roger Rippon's coffin label. Rippon, who lived in Southwark, died in the Newgate prison on Friday 16 February 1593. Anti-Anglican demonstrators seized on the opportunity of turning his funeral on the following day into an occasion of protest. A placard describing the Archbishop of Canterbury as both 'great ennemye of God' and

'great ennemy of the saints', and Justice Richard Young as one who had 'abused his power for the upholding of the Romishe Antichriste, prelacy and priesthood', was fixed to the coffin, which was then paraded from Newgate to Cheapside and thence to Young's house. Rippon was certainly the 16th, and quite possibly the 17th, prisoner to have died in the infamous Newgate prison between 1587 and early 1593, which was why his fellow-Separatists roundly, if imprudently, castigated the High Commissioners, who included Whitgift and Young, as murderers. Beside themselves with impotent rage, the authorities set about tracking down as many religious dissenters as they could sniff out, whether or not there was the slightest shred of evidence to connect them in any way with the incident. Any link with the Separatists or their activities, from attendance at their meetings to mere possession of any of their writings, was deemed proof sufficient of guilt to justify imprisonment first and trial afterwards, with a verdict of 'guilty' a foregone conclusion.

Analysis of the questions the Separatist prisoners were asked in the course of the intensive interrogations to which they were subjected in March and April 1593 betrays the grim determination of the ecclesiastical authorities to deal once and for all with the infuriating irritation these obstinate people caused. The interrogations went far beyond establishing the facts about, and responsibility for, the incident of Rippon's funeral procession. Many of the prisoners were questioned about the covenant they had

made, how long they had been attending their conventicles, and where their meetings were held. Most were asked about John Penry - did they know him, when did they last see him, had they heard him speak at any of their meetings, where was he now - indicating the authorities' suspicion that he was the author of the Marprelate Tracts, whom they were so desperate to track down and punish. All the examinees refused to take the hated ex-officio oath, which obliged them to give true answers to all and any questions put to them, because this almost always trapped those being questioned into incriminating both themselves and their friends. Yet another weapon in the hostile battery ranged against these ordinary people by the frightened authorities was the Statute of 23 Elizabeth chapter II, which prescribed penalties for anyone found guilty of producing, printing, publishing or possessing 'seditious' (i.e. Nonconformist) literature of any kind.

Seventy-two or so Separatists had been arrested at an 'illegal' gathering for religious worship in the woods at Islington near Finsbury on 4 March 1593. In April the interrogators seemed to move away from the matter of Roger Rippon's coffin, and also from their earlier close interest in John Penry, although four of their prisoners - Christopher Bowman, Henry Brodwater, Christopher Diggins and William Smithe - were suspected of having been involved in the former, and Arthur Bellot, Edward Grave and George Knyvton had actually been arrested with the latter on 22 March. Interest now centred on possibly the most potent agents of

education, namely, books. The prisoners were asked if they had any of the books of Barrow, Greenwood or Penry. Involvement in the publication or distribution of Separatist books was of much interest to the commissioners and lesser legal officials who had been entrusted with the examinations conducted in March 1593; Robert Boull, James Fowrestier (Forester), Robert Stokes and Daniel Studley were singled out for special attention. They were accorded the distinction of being interrogated by the two Chief Justices, Popham and Anderson, the Attorney-General Egerton and the Chancellor of the Diocese, Stanhope, who was also a Master in Chancery. This was because the charges against them, of publishing, distributing or financing books, involved felony. The change of emphasis that can be detected in the April 1593 examinations Carlson attributes to a change in the composition of the interrogating panel.⁴ On 26 March a Special Commission was appointed to examine Barrowists, Separatists, Catholic recusants, counterfeiters and vagrants - which affords an intriguing insight into the government's perception of the Separatists' placing on the scale of criminality! The records of these examinations in the Ellesmere manuscripts reveal one small but significant educational pointer - about half of the examinants signed their own names, while the other half made a mark.

Probably the most illuminating way of analysing the available data relating to the 52 Separatist prisoners, and particularly of assessing

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Ibid., 318

their individual placing on the scale of educational values, is to categorise them by occupations, so that both the socio-economic status of people who were attracted by Separatist ideas can be clarified, and also the significance or otherwise of their educational standing can be established.

Then as now, for reasons which it is beyond the scope of this study to justify, 'professional' people in the broadest sense of the term, were considered to be on the higher rungs of the social ladder. Twenty-five per cent of the 52 under consideration here can be regarded as being in this classification; the largest sub-group within this category is comprised of the four clergymen, Francis Johnson, John Penry, Thomas Settle and William Smith.

Francis Johnson, Minister but by the assemblies chosen to be a pastor of the congregacon, beyng of the age of XXXI yeres, or ther abouts, examined before Mr. Doctor Ceser, Mr. Doctor Goodman, Deane of Westminster, Mr. Barne, and Mr. Yonge. Whoe refuseth to be sworne but sayth: Item, beyng asked whether he hath or had any of Barrowe, Greenwood, or Penry's bookes, refuseth also to answear, but desireth he may be accused.⁵

Carlson offers some justification for regarding Johnson as of more significance than most of the other prisoners when he expresses his opinion that

He probably had read all of them. In April 1591, he collaborated with Sir Robert Sidney in the seizure, and burning, in June, of 2000 copies of Barrow's A Briefe Discoverie of the False Church and 1000 copies of A

Plaine Refutation. He kept two copies of the latter book for himself and a friend [George Gifford?], was strongly influenced by its arguments, returned to England and became the elected pastor of the Separatists in September 1592. In 1605, perhaps as an act of atonement and reparation, he reissued A Plaine Refutation at his own expense.⁶

It may not be too fanciful to detect a desire, conscious or even unconscious, on the part of the Southwark congregation, to demonstrate a measure of orthodoxy by electing an ordained clergyman as their Pastor, with all that that may imply with regard to the importance they attached to their Minister being an educated person. Certainly the defection of yet another Anglican clergyman (and there were three others among the 52 Separatists of whom the authorities were endeavouring to make an example) appears to have caused consternation among Elizabeth I's ministers; no less a personage than the Lord Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench (Sir John Popham), and with him the Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas (Sir Edmund Anderson), was assigned to question Johnson on the occasion of his first committal, by the Sheriff of London, to the Counter in Wood Street in October 1592.

Surprisingly, in view of his position as a known leader of the Separatists, and the consequent high importance attached by the government to capturing him, the record of John Penry's examination on 5 April 1593 by Gabriell Goodman, Mathew Dale, John Barne and Rychard Young, is no different in length or content

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Carlson, op. cit., 354.

from that of any of the other 51 people who were questioned at this time. However, his significance in the eyes of the authorities is attested by the fact that after his arrest on 22 March he was

examined on March 24 by Richard Young, visited on March 26 by Young, Dr. Richard Vaughan and his brother for a private conference and interrogation, conferred with by Dr. Balguy of the Temple [Nicholas Balgay or Balguay, successor to Richard Hooker] on March 28, and conferred with again on April 2 by Dr. Thomas Crooke, Richard Greenham, and Robert Temple.⁷

Despite his description as 'Clerke', Carlson asserts that Penry was not a cleric. Nevertheless, his education was clearly of a high standard; the record of his testimony on the day before he confirmed his witness with the seal of martyrdom contains the entry

Item, he sayeth he made and caused to be printed [in] Scotland, a book intituled "A Reformacon [noe] Enemye to Her Majesty and the State", and [a boke] which he translated called 'Thesis Genevencium'. Item, being asked what other bookes [he made] and caused to be printed the [re he] refuseth to answer.⁸

Penry, therefore, appears to have been a competent translator from Latin into English, as well as an author whose writings were regarded by his opponents as influential enough to be sought out for destruction whenever possible.

⁷ Ibid., 356

⁸ Ellesmere MS 2113

Whatever the view, if any, of education held by the first Separatists, their persecutors were shrewd enough to realise that the greatest potential for danger to the state-imposed ecclesiastical settlement lay with the better-educated men; official pressure was accordingly applied more heavily to them than to their educationally less-favoured brethren. This judgement is endorsed by the record of the examination of

Thomas Setle, whoe lately dwelt in Cowe Lane, Minister, made by Byshop Freke but nowe renownceth that ministry, of the age of XXXVIII yeres or therabouts, examined before the said comysioners the daye and yere aforesaid, whoe refuseth to take an othe but sayeth:...Item, beinge asked and required uppon his allegiance to shewe whether he hath or had or hath read any of Barrowe, Grenewood, or Penrie's bookes, refuseth to answer but sayeth he will not be his own accuser.⁹

Carlson provides the further important information that

Settel or Settle, of Queen's College Cambridge, ordained by Edmund Freake, Bishop of Norwich was a parish priest at Boxted, Suffolk. Captured December 17 or 24, 1592. Previously he had been cited before Archbishop Whitgift in 1586 and had been imprisoned in the Gatehouse about December 1589, or January ... 1590 ... After December, 1592, he remained in the Gatehouse until 1595 certainly and probably until the Spring of 1597.¹⁰

Settle is also recorded as having said "he hath spoken in prophesye in the congregacon". The significance of this admission lies in a correct understanding of the meaning of the word 'prophecy' in

⁹ Ellesmere MS 2117

¹⁰ L.H. Carlson, op. cit., 364

sixteenth-century England. It signified neither the foretelling of the future, nor the extempore utterance of subjective spiritual experiences or insights received by individuals, which under the influence of the late 20th century charismatic revival has become the contemporary connotation of the word. To the Tudors, prophesying was the exposition of Scripture; as such, it carried with it the implication of academic competence, a scholarly turn of mind and a sober mode of interpretation, all of which collectively can only imply a sound educational grounding - which, of course, Thomas Settle, as a trained and ordained Anglican clergyman, would already have acquired in any case.

The record of the last of the interrogations conducted on 5 April 1593 is arguably of greater significance than the majority of the cases cited in this chapter, in that it refers to an ordained clergyman of the established church who displayed the courage of his convictions by joining with the Separatists in the sure and certain knowledge that his action would draw the hostile fire of the authorities. The interest of his case is further enhanced by the fact that he was also one of the few examiners from outside London.

William Smyth of Bradford, in Wiltshire, Minister, of the age XXX yeres or ther abouts, made a mynister by the Byshop of Lychfeld and Coventry, and licenced to preach by the Byshop of Sarum nowe being, taken by Mr. Deane of Westminster, Mr. Dale, Mr. Barne, and Mr. Yonge. Who uppon his othe sayeth:...Item, being demanded whether he hath had any of Barrowe, Grenewood, or Penrie's bookes, refuseth to answer.¹¹

¹¹

Ellesmere MS 2114

Like Francis Johnson, William Smyth was considered important enough to be questioned by some officials of higher rank than those who were assigned to run-of-the-mill Separatists. Carlson reveals that as well as being interrogated by the Special Commissioners, Smyth was also questioned "by the Court of High Commission - Bishop Aylmer and others, and also by Sir John Popham, Lord Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench, and by Sir Edmund Anderson, Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas".¹²

The two schoolmasters who were questioned, George Johnson and William Denford, were also above the average level of Separatist social class and education. George Johnson, 1564-1605, was a native of Richmond in Yorkshire, where his father John was mayor. Carlson lists eight secondary sources of information about him,¹³ which reveal inter alia that he graduated BA, and MA in 1588 from Christ's College, Cambridge. He is described as having "served as schoolmaster and as teacher or preacher in the assemblies". Imprisoned on 4 March 1593, he was examined by Richard Young and John Ellis on 7 March, and before five judges (not named) on 2 April; he was further examined on at least two other occasions. Daniel Bucke, in his examination on 9 March, described him as reader in "the Cunstable his house in Islington"; he was clearly well-educated, by any criterion.

¹² L. Carlson, op. cit., 360

¹³ Ibid., 300

William Denford of Foster Lane, Scolemaster of the age of fifty yeres or ther abouts, examined before Mr. Doctor Goodman, Deane of Westminster, Mr. Dale, Mr. Barne, and Mr. Yonge, refuseth to be sworne but sayeth: ... Item, he confeseth that he had one of Barrowe and Greenwood's bookes of the Discovery ["A Brief Discoverie of the False Church"], but sayth he borrowed it of one but of whome he nowe remembreth not, and used it not above sennyth, and redelivered him [it] againe to the partye of whome he borrowed him [it].¹⁴

He was also of greater interest to Elizabeth's inquisition than the majority of people in custody at this time; according to Carlson

he was first apprehended about March...1589, indicted and convicted as a recusant for neglecting church attendance, and sent to the Newgate as a close prisoner. According to the statute of 23 Elizabeth, chapter 1, any schoolmaster who failed to attend church was disabled and subject to imprisonment for one year without bail.¹⁵

Of the two scriveners, Daniel Bucke, who was imprisoned on 4 March 1593, and was examined by Henry Townsend, Richard Young and John Ellis on 9 March, later conformed to the state church. The other scrivener examined at this time (3 April) was the 29-year old Henry Brodwater of St. Nicholas Lane.¹⁶ In common with many of his fellow-prisoners he denied possession of, acquaintance with, or even sight of, any of the books written by Barrow, Greenwood or Penry.

¹⁴ Ellesmere MS 2117

¹⁵ L. Carlson, op. cit., 363

¹⁶ Ellesmere MS 2107

George Kniveton of Newgate Market, a 34-year old apothecary, had been elected an Elder of the Separatist congregation in September 1592, and was arrested, together with Arthur Bellot, Edward Grave and John Penry in Stepney on 22 March 1593. "He sayeth he hath read some parte of Barrowe and Greenwood's books in writinge but hath none of them".¹⁷

The category of 'professional' people among the imprisoned Separatists includes the physician James Forester. His entry in the list of examinations of Separatists calls forth the following comment from Carlson:

Fowrestier, as he signs his name, or Forester, is one of the few educated laymen among the early Separatists. Robert Harrison and Robert Browne, Francis Johnson and John Greenwood, Thomas Settle and William Smithe, were educated clergymen, but Barrow as a lawyer and Fowrestier as a physician and Master of Arts are part of the laity. Penry remained a layman but was a de facto clergyman. George Johnson was a schoolteacher with a Master of Arts degree. All were Cambridge men with the possible exception of William Smithe, who may have been an Oxford man ... Fowrestier was arrested about December 1589 and was imprisoned at Newgate. In April 1590, he is listed as a prisoner in the Bridewell, and there he collaborated with Studley. Evidently, they were not "close" prisoners, and were free to exercise in the prison yard, hold meetings, and write out their "copy" ... On at least one occasion, Fowrestier served as the preacher or expounder ... The documents are incomplete.¹⁸

¹⁷ Ellesmere MS 2109

¹⁸ L.H. Carlson, op. cit., 309-310

John Popham, Thomas Egerton, Edmund Anderson and Edward Stanhope were again the examiners; Forester was interrogated on 19 March and admitted that he

wrote out some parte off the booke intituled A Breiff Discorse of the False Church, and as one shete was wryten the same was taken away, with the copy therof, and new brought ... Ther were sundry thynges that thys examinant fond falte with in respect off the sharpe maner off wrytyng therof, which thys examinant caused to be reformed; but whether he wrote the whole thereof he remembreth not for he sayeth he never sawe the booke beyng prynted. The same were caryed, always as he wrote the copyes, unto one Danyell Studley, or receaved by hym, who had the orygynall copy therof, which thys examinant saw in hys hand at Bridwell, they beyng fellow prysoners ther together; and he saw also the same Studley to wryte out a copy therof for hym selfe: and he sayeth he began to inclyne that way, but hath sythens sene, he thancketh God, their great error.¹⁹

Although Forester was one of the few Separatists who ultimately conformed, this extract is important because it gives a significant insight into the literary activities of the little group of conscientious objectors to the state regimentation of religion. In just three years, and working, as the extract makes clear, under extremely difficult conditions, the Separatists wrote and published at least the following six books:

1. A True Description out of the Worde of God, of the visible Church - published toward the end of 1589.

¹⁹

Ellesmere MS 2095. (L.H. Carlson, op. cit., 310, elucidates - "Daniel Studley received the original MS from Barrow in the Fleet, and Fowrestier prepared the fair copy for the printer. Collier (The Egerton Papers 178-179) has 'Description' but the reading is 'Discorse'. It should be 'Discoverie'").

2. A Collection of Certaine Sclaunderous Articles Gyven out by the Bisshops - about 500 copies were printed at Dort, and published around June 1590.
3. A Collection of Certain Letters and Conferences Lately Passed betwixt Certaine Preachers and Two Prisoners in the Fleet, by Barrow and Greenwood - about 500 copies were printed at Dort and published around July 1590.
4. An Answere to George Gifford's Pretended Defence of Read Praiers and Devised Litourgies - 500 copies were printed at Dort, and published around August 1590.
5. A Brief Discoverie of the False Church - 2000 copies were published in December 1590 and/or January and/or February 1591.
6. A Plaine Refutation of Mr. George Giffarde's Reprochful Booke - 1000 copies were published in March or April 1591.

Arthur Billet is of special interest on two specific counts. Unlike the majority of Separatists examined in 1593, he was not a Londoner; and he was one of the few who had had access to the full educational process available only to the privileged elite in late Tudor England. He is described as being "of Llanteglos by Fowey in Cornwall, scoller, of the age of XXV yeres or ther abouts, examyned by the said comissioners the daye and yere aforesaid, whoe refuseth to be sworne".²⁰ Carlson provides the information that Billet (or Byllet, or preferably Bellot, as he signed his petition to

²⁰

Ellesmere MS 2114

Lord Burghley) matriculated at Oxford University from Exeter College on 30 July 1585. The record of his testimony contains the comment,

Item, he denyeth that he hath or had any of Barrowe's, Greenwood's or Penrye's books, but hath received some of the written coppies and carried them over into the Lowe Contrye to be printed, and that he hath sene one of Barrowe's bookes in Nicholas Lee's howse in the hands of a contryman whose name he knoweth not.²¹

Carlson adds:

He probably had all six of the books of Barrow and Greenwood, and perhaps five or six of Penry's works. Daniel Studley testified that in the Bridewell he received from Bellot two copies of Barrow's A Brief Discoverie of the False Church. He was responsible for seeing through the press at Dort 2000 copies of this book, and 1000 copies of A Plaine Refutation. In April 1591, he revealed the whereabouts of the entire consignment, which was seized by Sir Robert Sidney at Flushing. Bellot was sent as a prisoner to Lord Burghley, who committed him to the custody of Archbishop Whitgift.²²

The socio-economically middle-ranking constituted the largest of the four broad bands discernible among the government's Separatist prisoners; perhaps it is not too surprising, in view of London's pre-eminence as a port, that as many as five of the 29 in this band were shipwrights. "John Hulkes of Detford, Shipwright, aged XXXI Yeres or ther abouts [examined for the second time on 4 April 1593] ... sayeth he never had nor sawe any of Barrowe,

²¹ L.H. Carlson, op. cit., 347

²² Ibid., 348

Grenewood or Penrie's books".²³ Carlson notes that "Hulkes was bailed upon his conformity".²⁴

William Marshall, 32, a shipwright of Wapping, who was questioned on 4 April 1593 by the Dean of Westminster (Gabriel Goodman), Matthew Dale, John Barnes and Richard Young, "sayeth he never had any of Barrowe, Grenewood or Penrye's bookes, but sayeth that he hath heard one John Barnett a seaman read some of those bookes".²⁵ William Mason of Wapping, "of the age of XXIIII yeres or ther abouts" was, like William Marshall, a shipwright, and was questioned on the same day by the same interrogators. His entry in the record of the interrogations contains, amongst others, the comment, "Item, he sayeth he hath heard Edward Chandler read some of Barrowe and Grenewood the books, but hath none of them nor had had any him self".²⁶ He was, however, one of the few who conformed. Carlson comments: "He was bailed upon his conformity. His recognizance was probably forty pounds".²⁷

The same manuscript records the examination, also on 4 April 1593, of "Henry Wythers of Detford Strand, shipwright, aged XXVII yeres or ther abouts, examyned the daye and yer aforesaid before the said comissioners, beinge sworne, sayeth: ... Item, he hath

²³ Ellesmere MS 2109

²⁴ L.H. Carlson, op. cit., 342

²⁵ Idem

²⁶ Ellesmere MS 2110

²⁷ L. Carlson, op. cit., 345.

heard some of Penrie's books read but knoweth not by whome". Similarly, "William Curland of Detford, shipwright, of the age of XXXty yeres or ther abouts, examyned before the said comissioners the daye and yere aforesaid:...Item, he sayeth he never had any of Barrowe, Grenewood, or Penrie's bookes".²⁸ Carlson discloses²⁹ that Curland was bailed on agreeing to return to his parish church.

Four of the detainees described themselves as tailors. John Barnes of Duck Lane, a 26-year old tailor who was first questioned on 8 March, was examined again on 3 April and "denyeth that he hath any of Barrowe, Grenewood, or Penrie's books or ever read any of them, not knoweth any that hath any of those bookes"³⁰. "William Eyles, Servant to one Cheriot, Taylor in Walbroke, of the age of XXII yeres, examined before Mr. Deane of Westminster, Mr. Dale, Mr. Barnes [Barne] and Mr. Yonge. Who refuseth to be sworne but sayth ... Item, he denyeth that ever he had any of Barrowe, Grenewood or Penrie's bookes".³¹ David Bristowe "of the liberty of St. Martyn's Le Grand, taylor of the age of XXX yeres or ther abouts"³² boldly refused to incriminate himself. "Item, beinge demaunded whether he had any of Barrowe's, Grenewood's, or Penrie's bookes, sayeth it maye be he had, it maye be he had not,

²⁸ Ellesmere MS 2111

²⁹ L.H. Carlson, op. cit., 352

³⁰ Ellesmere MS 2107.

³¹ Ellesmere MS 2108

³² Ellesmere MS 2115

and otherwise will not answer". The words carry a ring of authenticity, suggesting a verbatim record. Bristowe was quite possibly running the risk of drawing further unfavourable attention to himself by returning such a spirited answer to his interrogators.

George Smells of Finche Lane, Tailor, of the age of XL yeres or ther abouts, examined before Sir Owin Hopton, Knight, Mr. Doctor Goodman, Deane of Westminster, Mr. Dale, Mr. Barne, and Mr. Yong, who refuseth to be sworne, but sayth: ... Item, he sayth he hath sene one of Barrowe's bookes in the hands of Xpofer Bowman in the prison when they were ther together, and heard Bowman read the same booke.³³

Smells was questioned on 10 April 1593.

There were two purse-makers in the skilled category of the 52 Separatist prisoners. Abraham Pulbery, a 25-year old purse-maker examined by Richard Young and John Ellis on 4 and 7 March, and again on 3 April, was, as might be expected of a skilled artisan, able to read: "hee heard there [in Cheapside] publikely redde the paper which was sett upon the coffine [of Roger Rippon] ... And the same libell being shewed unto him, hee thinketh that it was in effecte the same hee heard redde in Chepeside".³⁴ He displayed a defiance which, in the context of the times, was almost dangerously daring - "being asked whither he had or hath any of Barrowe, Greenwood or Penrie's bookes, refuseth to answer,

³³ Ellesmere MS 2121

³⁴ Harley MSS 6848 f. 43 recto

sayenge he will saye neither yea nor noe".³⁵ That formal education was considered by the Separatists, in common with every-one else at the time, to be as much the responsibility of the head of the house as of anybody else, is revealed by the comment "Item, beinge asked whether he hath perswaded any to his oppinions and to those assemblies, sayth he hath not, but would doe what he might to instruct his owne famlye". "Thomas Hewet of St. Martyns Le Grand, Purse-maker, aged XXX Yeres...sayeth he never had any of Barrowe, Grenewood or Penrie's books".

Two shoemakers figure among those captives whose occupations are known. On 5 April the implacable pursuit of the Separatists by their persecutors reached its height, with no fewer than 12 examinations being conducted. Among them was

Leonerd Pidder of the Blackfriers, London, Shomaker, of the age of XXX yeres or ther about, examyned before Mr. Deane of Westminster, Mr. Dale, Mr. Barne, and Mr. Yonge. Whoe refuseth to answer uppon his othe but sayeth...Item, being asked whether he hath had any of Barrowe, Grenewood or Penrie's bookes, sayeth he will not accuse himself.³⁶

Carlson points out that "Edward Grave had stated in his examination on April 2 that he had lent to Pedder one of Barrow's books of conference - probably A Collection of Certain Letters and

³⁵ Ellesmere MS 2107

³⁶ Ellesmere MS 2111.

Conferences"³⁷ - clearly implying that Pedder was able to read it. This is not to say that the Separatist ideology appealed only to the educated - witness the surviving records of the examinations of perhaps the majority of Separatist adherents, of whom the following is typical:

William Weaver of Graye's Inn Lane, shomaker, of the age of XL yeres or ther abouts, examined before the said comissioners the daye and yere aforesaid [6 April 1593], who refuseth to be sworne but sayeth: ... Item, he sayeth he sawe one of Barrowe's books in ... Robert Bodkin's howse.³⁸

The last of the skilled occupations for which there was more than one representative in jail in London in the Spring of 1593 was that of weaver; John Dalamore, weaver, aged 25 years, of Bath, admitted (3 April) seeing one of Barrow and Greenwood's books.³⁹

Placed in alphabetical order of job title, the first of the round dozen of occupations for each of which there was only one practitioner among the imprisoned Separatists, was that of carpenter. "William Darvall of Shorediche, Carpenter, of the age of XXV yeres or ther abouts, examined the daye and yere aforesaid before the said Comissioners, whoe refuseth to be sworne but sayeth: ... he will not accuse him self and otherwise will not answer".⁴⁰ His refusal to risk incriminating himself may well be explained by the fact that

³⁷ L.H. Carlson, op. cit., 358

³⁸ Ellesmere MS 2117

³⁹ Ellesmere MS 2106

⁴⁰ Ellesmere MS 2116

he was examined on the very day on which Barrow and Greenwood were executed; in such intimidating circumstances, a young artisan could well be sympathised with for declining to put his own neck in the noose. This means, of course, that we have no direct evidence as to his own level of educational achievement; but in the light of all the other examinations of Separatists recorded in the Spring of 1593 it is reasonable to assume that he would, like all the other prisoners, have been questioned as to his contact with any of the martyrs' books.

There was one clothworker: "John Parkes of Doelittle Lane, London, clothworker, age L yeres or ther abouts, examined the daye and yere aforesaid [5 April 1593] by the said comissioners. Who will not be sworne but sayeth:...Item, he denyeth that ever he had any of Barrowe, Grenewood, or Penrye's bookes".⁴¹

The coppersmiths' trade was represented by

Xpofer [Christopher] Simkins of Aldersgate Strete, Coppersmith, of the age of XXII or ther abouts, examyned before Mr. Deane of Westminster, Mr. Dale, Mr. Barne, and Mr. Yonge, the daye and yere aforesaid, refuseth to be sworne but sayeth: ... Item, he refuseth to tell whether he hath had any of Barrowe, Grenewood, or Perrie's [Penry's] bookes.⁴²

⁴¹ Ellesmere MS 2114

⁴² Ellesmere MS 2115

There is reference to a farmer, John Clark, aged 50 years, of Walsoken in Norfolk, near Wisbech, (3 April)⁴³, who is of further interest because he was one of the few among the 52 who was not a Londoner; he hailed from the heart of eastern England, which was such a stronghold of radical Protestantism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

A felt-maker figures among the Separatists who were examined - in his case, after four or five years in gaol; for reasons which are obscure, he was maltreated even more savagely than his fellow-believers. Obviously, levels of educational attainment varied from individual to individual; but the case of Quentin Smyth will serve to illustrate the assertion that educational opportunities were not only available, but were grasped and, within the limits of each person's ability, utilised, as much by the Separatists as by any other identifiable grouping in late Tudor England.

Quintin Smyth of Southworke, feltmaker, of the age of XXX yeres or ther abouts, examined before Mr. Doctor Goodman, Deane of Westminster, Mr. Dale, Mr. Barne, and Mr. Yonge. Whoe refuseth to be sworne but sayeth: ... Item, he sayeth to his knowlege he never had any of Barrowe, Grenewood, or Penrie's books.⁴⁴

Carlson adds the further information that "He was first arrested in 1588 or ... 1589. For distributing Separatist pamphlets in manuscript, he was 'taken from his labours, cast into the dungeons

⁴³ Ellesmere MS 2103

⁴⁴ Ellesmere MS 2116

with irons, his Bible taken from him by Stanhopp [Dr. Edward Stanhope]’.”⁴⁵

The point has frequently, and rightly, been made that mere possession of books does not in itself constitute indisputable proof of literacy; and equally, evidence of literacy cannot be made to equate with education properly so designated. Nevertheless, in the special case of men and women who were willing to run the risk of arrest, imprisonment and execution for their adherence to a minority viewpoint which was seriously suspect in the eyes of almost all of their contemporaries, there must be a strong presumption that possession of the Bible and Separatist books and pamphlets suggests the ability to read them. More than that, it indicates a capacity to comprehend, discuss and defend radical ideas for which there can have been no meaningful preparation within these people's own previous experiences. The fathers of English religious Dissent were not only brave pioneers - they were people of intellectual stature, as well as of principled courage. Their quiet refusal to be brow-beaten by the full range of intimidatory pressures available to, and utilised by, their persecutors, implies a grasp of what they were witnessing to; and such a grasp strongly suggests an education, however rough and rudimentary, which was yet worthy of the term. There is no way of knowing how deep was the teaching, nor how high the demands made on the mental powers of those who listened to it, when upwards of 70 people

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L.H. Carlson, op. cit., 365

assembled in the woods close to London, at such places as Islington and Deptford, or when smaller groups met surreptitiously in the houses of one or other of their number in the city or its suburbs; but the steadfastness of the overwhelming majority of them, and the rapid spread of their doctrines over the next 50 years or so, culminating in their brief but astonishing triumph in the 1650's and their subsequent persistence for the next 300 years or more, despite civil and political penalties for much of that time - all this points to deeply-laid intellectual foundations, which were clearly not beyond the grasp of the first to build upon them.

The cases already cited serve to safeguard against the misleading assumption that education in any meaningful sense of the term was limited to an academically-gifted and formally-trained elite. Another skilled artisan was John Nicholas, a glover. More information has survived about the goldsmith Christopher Bowman. "Christopher Bowman, goldsmith, age 32 yeares or there aboutes" appears to have been arrested at some time between 17 and 28 February 1593, for at least the second time, having been imprisoned in the Wood Street Counter for more than three years from March 1589. He was examined by Richard Young twice, on 1 March and 4 April 1593. He is described as having been elected a deacon by the church in September 1592, and as having been made responsible for the distribution of funds. It is reasonable to surmise that his occupation as a skilled worker, and the position of trust and responsibility he held in the church, imply education to a level

above the average for the country as a whole; though his placement in the skilled category, the largest to emerge from this small sample, must mean that his education was probably to an average level, broadly so conceived, within the context of London where nearly all these examinants lived.

Christopher Bowman's second examination took place on 4 April 1593. He told his interrogators, Gabriell Goodman, Mathew Dale, John Barne and Rychard Young, that:

he was drawnen to his oppinions by the course that the forward preachers tooke, and by a book of a sermon uppon the xiith of the Romans, made by Mr. Chatterton, as he thinketh, and by the forward preachers; he sayeth he meaneth one Snape and Kinge, with others, whose course made him enter into further serche of the matter of reformacon...he sayeth he had one of Barrowe's bookes of Discovery ["A Briefe Discoverie of the False Church"] about two yeres ago, which book he had of Robert Stokes and, as he remembreth, he redelivered the same to Stokes againe.⁴⁶

There was also a joiner among the prisoners.

Thomas Mihilfeld of St. Savior's, joyner, of the age of XXXIII yeres or ther abouts, examined before Mr. Doctor Goodman, Deane of Westminster, Mr. Barne, Mr. Dale, and Mr. Yong, who refuseth to be sworn but sayeth: ... Item, he sayeth he never had any of Barrowe, Grenewood, or Penrie's bookes.⁴⁷

Still in the skilled category of jailed Separatists, the leather dressers' skill was represented by Robert Abraham, a 26-year old leather

⁴⁶ Ellesmere MS 2110

⁴⁷ Ellesmere MS 2112

dresser, and servant to Thomas Rookes, of St. Olave's, Southwark. He was questioned twice on 3 April 1593, and may also have been examined previously, around 7 March, though no record of such an examination survives. "He sayth he hath sene some of Barrow and Grenewood's bookes, but hath none of them and remembreth not whome he hath sene to have the same bookes".⁴⁸

The trunk-maker Edward Gilbert, a 21-year old apprentice "of St. Gregorie's Parish nere Powle's ... denyeth that ever he sawe anye of Barrowe, Grenewood or Penrye's bookes".⁴⁹ There was also a turner among the prisoners questioned at this time.

Thomas Mitchell of London, Turner, of the age of XXX yeres or ther abouts, examined before the said comissioners the daye and yere aforesaid, whoe refuseth to be sworne but sayth:...Item, he sayth he had one of Grenewood's bookes written against one Gyfford, a preacher in Essex, which he calleth against redd prayer.⁵⁰

The skilled category was completed by an unidentified 'worker of caps'.

Adjacent to the skilled workers on the spectrum of social class and economic function were seven traders. Three of the seven are described as fishmongers. Robert Boull was examined on 19 March by John Popham, Thomas Egerton, Edmund Anderson and Edward

⁴⁸ Ellesmere MS 2106, recording Abraham's first interrogation on 3 April 1593

⁴⁹ Idem

⁵⁰ Ellesmere MS 2145

Stanhope. He is described as a fishmonger; but the surviving record of his examination⁵¹ concentrates exclusively on his involvement with the printing at Dort in the Netherlands and the smuggling into England, of about 500 copies of A Colleccyon off Certen Letters and Conferences Lately Passed betwene Certen Preachers and Two Prysoners in the Flete, written by Barrow and Greenwood. Carlson suggests that Boull may have assisted with some of the five other Brownist books printed at Dort between 1589-1591.⁵² Mere involvement with the processes of book-production cannot of itself be construed as evidence of 'education'; nevertheless, it is difficult to accept that Boull was solely a front man, employed only because journeys across the North Sea between England and the Netherlands would be unlikely to arouse undue suspicion in the minds of Walsingham's ever-watchful agents. The dangers inherent in the whole enterprise were such that the weight of probability must rest on the assumption that Boull was educated enough to be fully aware of the nature of the book for which he acted as agent. He was in fact indicted on 21 March "for publishing seditious books, in violation of 23 Elizabeth, chapter II, section 4, and on 23 March was convicted and sentenced to death. Although he was not executed, he remained in Newgate prison where he died before 1596".⁵³

⁵¹ Ellesmere MS 2093

⁵² L.H Carlson, op. cit., 309

⁵³ Idem

Edward Grave, fishmonger, aged 25 years of St. Botolph's in Thomas Street, (3 April), "saithe he hath had one of Barrowe and Greenwood's books of conference, but he remembreth not to whome he delivered the same booke".⁵⁴

John Sparewe, cittizen and fishe monger of London, of the age of LX yeres, examined before Mr. Doctor Goodman, Deane of Westminster, Mr. Dale, Mr. Barne, and Mr. Yonge. Whoe refuseth to be deposed [sworn] but sayeth:...Item, he sayeth he hath not nor never had nor sene any of Barrowe, Greenwood or Penrie's bookes.⁵⁵

Three others of the traders were haberdashers. Roger Waterer, haberdasher and late servant to Robert Pavey, aged 22, of St. Martin, Ludgate, "sayeth he hath had one of Barrowe and Greenwood's books, viz. the conference [A Collection of Certain Letters and Conferences, published about July 1590] but of whome he had it or what became of it, he sayeth he knoweth not".⁵⁶

Edward Boys of St. Bride's Parishe, haberdasher, of the age of XXXIII yeres or ther abouts, examined before Mr. Doctor Cesar, Mr. Doctor Goodman, Deane of Westminster, Mr. Dale, Mr. Barne, and Mr. Yong. Whoe refuseth to be sworne but sayeth: ... Item, being asked whether he hath or had any of Barrowe, Greenwood or Penrie's bookes, sayeth he will not accuse himself and otherwise will not answer.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Ellesmere MS 2107

⁵⁵ Ellesmere MS 2145

⁵⁶ Ellesmere MS 2105

⁵⁷ Ellesmere MS 2112

Carlson describes him as "a prosperous haberdasher who left a legacy of £300 to his wife".⁵⁸

George Collier of St. Martin's, Ludgate, haberdasher, of the age of XXXVIII yeres, examined before the said comissioners [Goodman, Dale, Barne and Young] the daye and yere aforesaid [5 April 1593], whoe refuseth to be sworne but sayeth:...Item, he sayeth he sayeth [sic] he never had any of Barowe, Grenewood, or Penrie's bookes.⁵⁹

The last of the examinations of Separatists in March 1593 was that of Daniel Studley, a draper, who had been arrested in December 1592 and was questioned on 20 March following by John Popham, William Lewyn, Edmund Anderson and Edward Stanhope. He had been active in the promulgation of Separatist writings:

He confesseth that he had the orygynall of the booke intituled A Brieff Discovery off the False Church, which he had receaved shete by shete at Mr. Henry Barowe's hands in the Flette, when as he and one Andrew Smyth hadd lycens from the Archbusshopp of Canterbury to have accesse unto hym. He sayeth that James Forester brought word to thys examinant from the sayd Henry Barowe that he was to have that copy to copy out to be putt in prynt, which thys examinant dyd delyver unto the same James Forester, who wrote out of the same an other copy of the whole therof, which copy was that by which yt was prynted. He confessyth that he had the orygynall under the sayed Barow's hand of the same Forester backe agayne, and began to wryte out a copy therof; but he sayeth he knoweth not what ys become of that copy under the same Barow's hand. He confessyth he had two off those bookes, after they were printed, off Arthur Byllett, and were delyvered thys examinant at Brydwell. He sayeth he delyvered the one of those bookes to John Gwalter about two years past in

⁵⁸ L.H. Carlson, op. cit., 349

⁵⁹ Ellesmere MS 2112

Brydewell, but who hadd the other of this examinant he can not tell at thys present, unless yt were the same John Gwalter. He confessyth that within thys halff year he hath bene chosen by the congregacyon to be one of the elders.⁶⁰

Studley appears to have been something of a colourful character.

Carlson records that

On 23 March 1593, he was found guilty of publishing and dispersing Barrowist books. He was in the Newgate in 1595. In 1597, he was liberated, on condition that he go to Newfoundland and the Magdalen Islands. The expedition failed, he returned to England, went to Amsterdam in the fall of 1597, and was very active as elder in the Ancient Church ... There is no doubt that Studley was a trouble-maker, an aggressive, shrewd and unscrupulous character. He caused division in the church at Norwich, at London and at Amsterdam. Serious moral charges were made against him.⁶¹

Mention has already been made of the one woman among the Separatists who were interrogated in March and/or April 1593; she was Katherin Unwin, described as a widow.

Although the occupations of two of the detainees are not mentioned, the information which is given about them is valuable in extending, if only a little further, our knowledge of the educational standing of the late Tudor Separatists.

John Edwardes, whose age and occupation are not recorded, was arrested on 4 March 1593, and examined by Richard Young on 6

⁶⁰ Ellesmere MS 2096

⁶¹ L.H. Carlson, op. cit., 313-314

March. It is likely that he was at least literate, since four lines of a letter sent to him in London by John Penry from Scotland in 1591 are quoted in Ellesmere MS 2148, f. 89 recto.

Robert Stokes, who was interrogated on 20 March 1593, is of interest because he actively supported the Separatists from 1589 to 1591, and helped to finance the printing of the six books at Dort, as well as helping in their transportation and dispersion. However, in about September 1591 the strength of his Separatist convictions apparently began to fade, and in October or November 1592 he was ex-communicated by the newly-organised congregation. "He was not indicted on March 21 ... since he had abandoned the Separatists and they had denounced him".⁶² His examination is worth noticing, however, for the light it throws on the educational activity of the Separatists, construed in terms of the writing, publication and dissemination of printed books. The manuscript has

He sayeth whyles he held that opynyon he was at the pryson with the sayd Henry Barow and John Grenwood, and they moved thys examynant fyrst to procure the boke intituled A Colleccyon off certen Slanderous Articles, etc., and one other booke intituled An Answer to Georg Gyfford's Pretended Defens of Red Prayers, to be prynted, about thys time three yeares, which thys examinant dyd cause to be done accordyngly, at thys examinant's owne charg; and ther were printed about fyve hundred of eche off those bokes at Dort, which thys examinant conveyed over into England after they were prynted; some of which bookes the same Henry Barow and John Grenwood had the dysposycyon off to the number of

about two or three hundred ... He confessyth that the sayd Barrow and Greneway [Greenwood] dealt with thys examinant to get that [A Collectyon of Certeyne Letters and Conferences Lately Passed, etc.] prynted also, and that was about mydsommer last was two yeares, at which tyme thys examynant promysed to gett yt done, and the copy therof beyng sent to one Robert Bulle now in the Counter of the Pultry, to whom thys examinant gave order that what so ever the sayd Barow and Greenwood shold direct hym to do, the same Bull shold do yt at thys examinant's charg. And so the same Barow and Greenwood gave dyrectyon to the same Bull for the doying therof.

And thys examinant comyng into the Low Contryes, to Dort, wher the same also were printed, had about CC of those bookes put into thys examinant's clokebag by Robert Bull; and so thys examinant brought them into England, and delyvered sundry of those bookes to one Nychas Lye to be sold. And of those also there were prynted about fyve hundred. He sayth also that the booke intituled A Breiff Discovery of the False Church and the booke intituled A Playne Refutacyon of Mr. G. Gifford's Book etc., thys examinant procured, at hys charg, to be prynted at Dort about Christmas last was two yeares; which was lykewyse done by the perswasyon of the same Mr. Barow and Greenwood, all which were taken at Flushyng and Burned. And ther were of those thre thousand prynted, as thys examinant understood, and Arthure Byllett was the examiner [proof-reader] for that impressyon. He sayeth that those severall impressyons stud thys examinant in about xl li [£40]. He sayeth, also, he caused a little thyng of one shete of paper to be prynted by their procurement before all thys, called The Descripcion off the Vysyble Church.⁶³

In the light of this evidence, Carlson's reference (vide supra) to "the few educated laymen among the early Separatists" begins to sound less convincing. Notwithstanding his ultimate submission to the Church of England, Stokes was a convinced Separatist when he undertook all the activity described above - convinced enough to run all the dangers of active participation in the promotion of Separatist ideas, at a time when even merely passive participation could bring down savage punishment from a harsh politico/ecclesiastical establishment. His deep involvement with the Separatists must therefore call forth the question as to why he ran the risks he did? He was also clearly a man of some substance - there is more than one reference to print runs being produced "at hys owne charg", and the specific statement that "those severall impressyons stud thys examinant in about xl li [£40]". There must have been strong motives compelling him to utilise some at least of his capital in an extremely risky enterprise. It would appear that the entire print-run of two books which Stokes financed, totalling some 3000 volumes in all, was burnt in the Netherlands, before they even began their journey to England, their intended destination. The evidence suggests that the total print-run of the first six Separatist books listed above was in the region of at least 5000 copies. For whom were these books intended?

Clearly, there was a strong, perhaps dominant, polemical purpose behind the writing and publication of these works; but as well as serving apologetic needs, in terms of enlightening Anglican inquisitors as to the Separatists' views of authority in the church,

these works must also have been intended to teach the infant but growing congregations which were beginning to emerge elsewhere in London, and also in the provinces - notably, though not solely, in East Anglia.

This is in no way to assert that every member of every Separatist congregation was able to read and comprehend all, or even any, of the books which were slowly beginning to be made available to strengthen emotional conviction with a stiffening of scriptural backing and rational reasoning; but it is to argue that there certainly must have been at least some believers in each gathered church who were competent to read, understand, and expound the printed formulations of Separatist theory and practice to the newly-converted. It all rather depends on the context in which the phrase "few educated laymen among the early Separatists" is placed. Of course they were a minuscule proportion of the population at large; but as a percentage of the membership of the Separatist congregations, they simply cannot be so airily dismissed. Information to satisfy the rigorous requirements of modern statistical enquiry does not exist; but enough incidental evidence has survived to suggest that the level of education among the original members of the first independent churches was higher than a mere ability to read and/or write. It is simply not valid to assume an automatic equation between social class and educational achievement. Reference has been made above to William Marshall, a ship-wright, who "sayeth that he hath heard one John Barnett a seaman read some of those bookes". Such a comment cannot be

interpreted as proof that all the early Separatists were able to assimilate and organise for themselves closely reasoned printed arguments; but in the context of the scarcity of evidence of any kind, for or against the proposition, some significance must attach to the statement that a sailor was able to cope with the demands of a case put in writing. Some weight must also be given to the fact that these religious radicals were pioneering a new concept. Psychological overtones may be detected here; there will always be people attracted to the latest novelty, simply because they perceive in it a chance to draw attention to themselves. But when due allowance has been made for this kind of inevitable side-accompaniment to the emergence of a new development, it is obvious that the majority of the people who were persuaded by what they heard and read from Barrow, Browne and Greenwood, Penry, Robinson and Smyth, Helwys, Murton and Johnson, Ainsworth, Brewster and Harrison, to name only a dozen of the first Separatist thinkers and leaders, were in fact sufficiently educated to understand them, and strongly enough convinced to act upon what they understood. They were very far from being emotional fanatics of the sort who emerged in the 1640's and briefly swayed the thoughts and actions of some of the unthinking mass of the people in that stormy decade. The founding fathers of English religious Dissent made their distinctive witness to a society which was relatively stable, and anxious to preserve the demonstrable benefits of that stability. Whoever therefore proposed any changes to the largely acceptable religious status quo had not only to be sure of his beliefs, but also able to present them to, and to defend

them against, antagonistic opponents who commanded all the means of coercion available in Elizabeth I's unitary state. Reflection on these facts suggests that the early Separatists must have had a higher-than-average capacity for such achievements as comprehending abstract concepts, and following lines of argument to their logical conclusions - characteristics which will not necessarily be revealed or measured by conventional modes of assessing educational attainment.

Providentially, records survive of Separatists held in London prisons between 1587 and 1593 as a result of the determined campaign by Elizabeth's ministers to root out what was seen as a potentially politically dangerous movement. These records provide enough socio-economic data to enable the construction of a useful profile of these people's occupations and, by acceptable inference, their educational attainments. The sources of this information comprise a document in State Papers, Domestic, Elizabeth, Volume 204, Item 10, in the Public Record Office in London, which contains the names of 22 people arrested at a private conventicle held in Henry Martin's house on 8 October 1587; in Harley MSS. 6848, ff. 20 verso - 21 recto, in the British Museum in London, printed in Edward Arber, An Introductory Sketch to the Martin Marprelate Controversy, 1588-1590, pages 38-40; in A Collection of certaine Sclaunderous Articles Gyven out by the Bisshops, sig. A iv verso - B i recto; in a petition to Lord Burghley in about April 1590, requesting a free and Christian conference, and the right to be granted bail, or at least the "privilege" of having the Separatist

prisoners brought together in one prison (the Bridewell, or any other convenient place) - the petition is found in Lansdowne MSS. 109 folio 42, number 15; and in the Ellesmere MSS in the Henry E. Huntington Library at San Marino in California. Conflation of these sources provides a list of 122 names, 57 of which also have their occupations recorded; 29 callings are identified among the 112 men and 10 women who are listed as having been deprived of their freedom in the seven years between 1587 and 1593. In the following alphabetical list, the allocation of each of the 20 occupations to one of 4 main groupings is my own.

<u>NAME</u>	<u>OCCUPATION</u>	<u>GROUPING</u>
* Abraham, Robert	Leather dresser	skilled
Allen, Peter	Servant	unskilled
Andrews, Robert		
Auger		
Badking, Robert	Tailor	skilled
* Barnes, John	Tailor	skilled
Barnett, John	Seaman	unskilled
Barrow, Henry	Lawyer	professional
Blackborough, William		
* Boull, Robert	Fishmonger	trader
* Bowman, Christopher	Goldsmith	skilled
* Boyce, Edward	Haberdasher	trader
Bright, George		
* Bristowe, David	Tailor	skilled
* Brodwater, Henry	Scrivener	professional
Broomall, William		
Browne, Christopher		
* Bucke, Daniel	Scrivener	professional
Burry, Edith	Widow	unskilled
Burt, William		
Buser, John		
* Byllett, Arthur	Scholar	professional
Canadine, Thomas		
Chandler, Edward		
Chaundler, Alice	Widow	unskilled
Chaundler, John		
* Clark, John	Farmer	skilled
Clarke, William		
Claxton, Anthony		
* Collier, George	Haberdasher	trader

	Cooke, Anthonie		
	Crane, Nicholas	Clergyman	professional
	Cranford, John		
*	Curland, William	Shipwright	skilled
*	Dalamore, John	Weaver	skilled
	Darvall, William	Carpenter	skilled
	Debenham, John		
*	Denford, William	Schoolmaster	professional
	Diggins, Christopher		
	Dodson, William		
*	Edwardes, John		
	Endford, Thomas		
*	Eyles, William	Servant	unskilled
	Farret, Margaret		
	Fisher, John		
	Forester, James	Physician	professional
	Forester, William		
	Fouller, William		
	Francys, John		
	Freeman, Thomas		
	Gamble, Clement	Servant	unskilled
*	Gilbert, Edward	Trunk-maker	skilled
*	Grave, Edward	Fishmonger	trader
*	Greenwood, John	Clergyman	professional
	Griffiths, Robert		
	Gwalter, John		
	Hayes, Luke		
	Hayward, Richard		
*	Hewet, Thomas	Purse-maker	skilled
*	Hulkes, John	Shipwright	skilled
	Hutton, William		
	Jackson, Anne		
	Jackson, Richard		
	Jackson, Robert		
	Jackson, Roger		
	Johnes, Anthonie		
*	Johnson, Francis	Clergyman	professional
*	Johnson, George	Schoolmaster	professional
	King,		
*	Knyvton, George	Apothecary	professional
	Lacy, Robert	Lawyer	professional
	Lancaster, John		
	Lane, Walter		
	Legate, Thomas		
	Lemare, Thomas		
	Lye, Nicholas		
	Maltusse, Richard		
*	Marshall, William	Shipwright	skilled
	Marshe, Edward		
	Martin, Henry		
*	Mason, William	Shipwright	skilled
	Maynard, Margaret	Widow	unskilled
*	Mihilfeld, Thomas	Joiner	skilled

*	Mitchell, Thomas	Turner	skilled
	Myller, Judith		
	Nicholas, John	Glover	skilled
	Nicholson, Edmond		
*	Parkes, John	Cloth-worker	skilled
*	Pedder, Leonard	Shoemaker	skilled
*	Penry, John		
*	Pulbery, Abraham	Purse-maker	skilled
	Purdy, John		
	Reave, Thomas		
	Redborne, Robert	Servant	unskilled
	Rippon, Roger		
	Roe, Alice	Widow	unskilled
	Roper, Christopher		
	Russell, Thomas	Servant	unskilled
*	Setle, Thomas	Clergyman	professional
*	Simkins, Christopher	Coppersmith	skilled
	Skarlet, Richard		
	Skipworth, Roland		
*	Smells, George	Tailor	skilled
*	Smithe, William	Clergyman	professional
	Smyth, Andrew		
*	Smythe, Quintin	Feltmaker	skilled
	Snape,		
*	Sparewe, John	Fishmonger	trader
	Stephens, Thomas		
	Stokes, Robert		
	Studley, Daniel	Draper	trader
	Studley, Jerome		
	Tailour, Anna		
	Thompson, Edmond		
	Thompson, Henry		
	Umberfield, Richard		
	Unwen, Katherin	Widow	unskilled
*	Waterer, Roger	Haberdasher	trader
*	Weaver, William	Shoemaker	skilled
	Wheeler, Richard		
	Wyman, Agnes		
*	Wythers, Henry	Shipwright	skilled

N.B. * denotes prisoners who have been noticed in the preceding pages.

This listing yields the following information. The four main groupings into which the recorded occupations seem to fall more or less naturally have been classified in descending order on a socio-economic scale as professional, skilled, trader, and unskilled.

The largest category, containing 25 names, is the skilled group. Fourteen professionals constitute the second largest group. The third in size, with 11 names, is the unskilled group, and 7 traders make up the smallest category.

Known occupations by broad categories, with number of occurrences of each occupation

Skilled -	16 occupations, 25 practitioners
Shipwright	- 5
Tailor	- 4
Purse-maker	- 2
Shoe-maker	- 2
Carpenter	- 1
Cloth-worker	- 1
Coppersmith	- 1
Farmer	- 1
Feltmaker	- 1
Glover	- 1
Goldsmith	- 1
Joiner	- 1
Leather dresser	- 1
Trunk-maker	- 1
Turner	- 1
Weaver	- 1
Professional -	7 occupations, 14 practitioners
Clergyman	- 5
Lawyer	- 2
Schoolmaster	- 2
Scrivener	- 2
Apothecary	- 1
Physician	- 1
Scholar	- 1
Unskilled -	1 occupation, 1 practitioner
Seaman	- 1
Trader -	3 occupations, 7 practitioners
Fishmonger	- 3
Haberdasher	- 3
Draper	- 1

(N.B. 5 prisoners are described as servants, and a further 5 as widows - i.e., they are denoted by status rather than by occupation)

It will be noticed that this sample, over twice the size of the group of 52 prisoners analysed in this chapter, reverses the position on the numerical scale of the two lower socio-economic classifications, but this does not materially alter the most important fact to emerge from this review of the available statistics. This is, that in an admittedly somewhat arbitrary, but by no means unfounded, division of non-aristocratic Tudor society into 4 categories, the Separatists were most numerous, not in the bottom, nor even the bottom two, socio-economic groupings, which in general terms, would be comprised of less well-educated people; instead, the majority of them (39 out of the 57, i.e., 68.4%, whose occupations are known to us) are located in the top two divisions of this four-level taxonomy. It is reasonable to assume that these people were likely to have received more in the way of education, broadly understood, than those in the two lower divisions. It is acknowledged that the sample, not a wide one to start with, is skewed by the fact that it is overwhelmingly comprised of Londoners, who had far greater opportunities of contact with radical religious thinkers and their ideas, for reasons already set out at the start of this chapter; but in the last resort statistics can only be compiled from the evidence available, and unless and until further evidence comes to light, it is justifiable to conclude that the early modern English Separatists were in general terms better educated people than earlier commentators have suggested.

It does not seem as if any conclusion of significance can be drawn

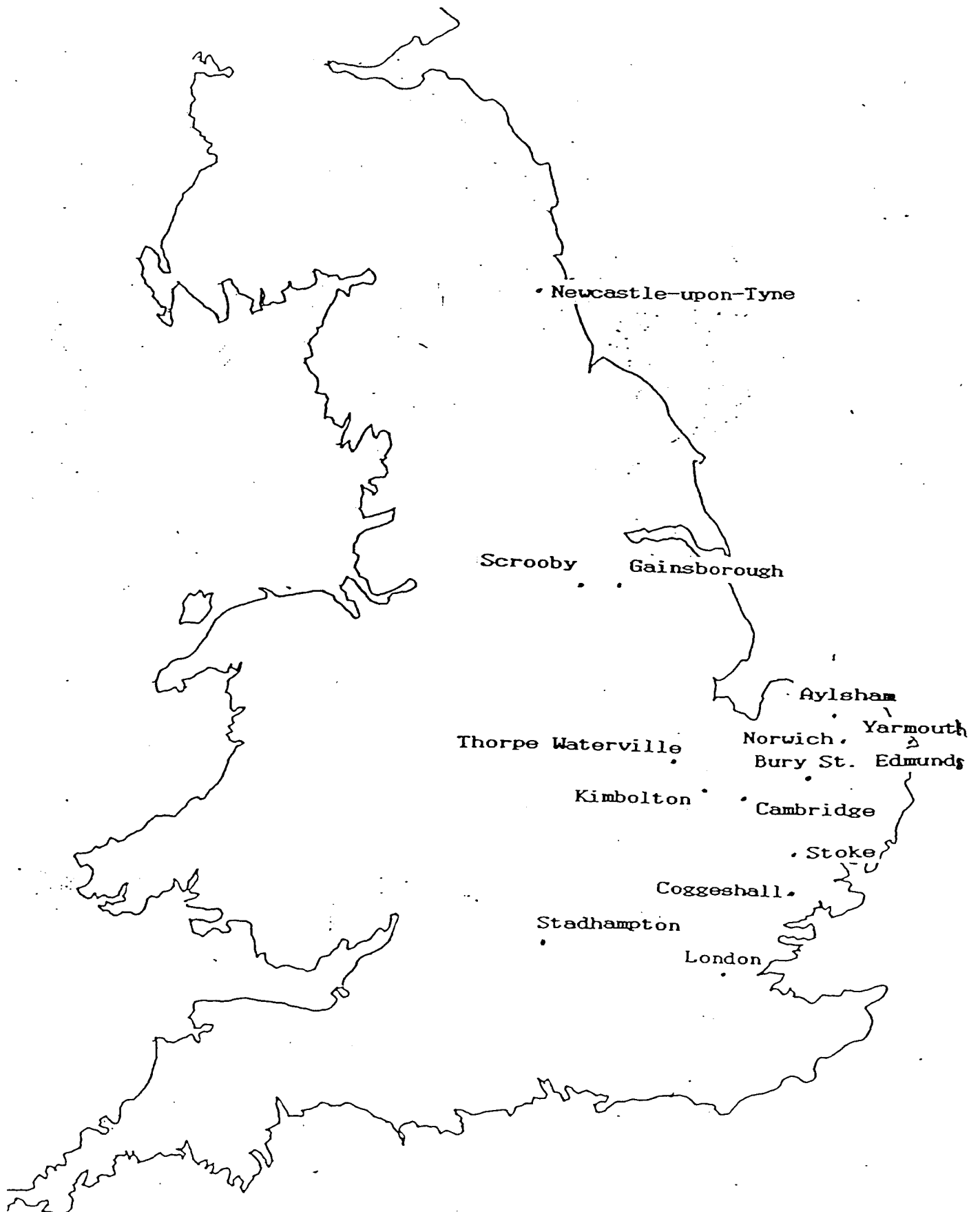
from the fact that six of the 52 Separatist prisoners whose interrogations have been analysed here eventually submitted to the Church of England. In fact, only five of the six can be meaningfully considered, since Robert Stokes' occupation is not known. The five are all located in the top two of the four broad groupings utilised in this survey and it is interesting that three of those five were shipwrights; but this cannot be categorised as anything other than a slightly unusual coincidence. It is probably more significant that the six conformers were all Londoners; the implication is that, living, as they did, under the very noses of the officials charged with implementation of government policy, they were under considerably greater pressure, psychological, as well as physical, than their fellow-believers living in other parts of the country, less accessible to the inquisitiveness of government agents and spies.

The seven prisoners who are described as having come from outside London are also located in the upper half of the occupational categories identified for the purposes of this thesis. Of the five who may be classified as professionals, three were clergymen (if John Penry be allowed this designation, since, although he was not formally ordained, he acted in all respects as if he were, apart from specifically hieratic functions), one was a schoolmaster, and one is described as a scholar. The two skilled men were occupied in weaving and farming. The geographical provenance of all of the seven appears to be wholly random. The only fact worth commenting on in that respect is the slightly surprising one that

only two of them originated from Eastern England. In view of the striking concentration of Separatist activity in that part of the country (see accompanying map) and its relative proximity to London, it might have been expected that more people from the eastern counties would have been drawn to London for economic reasons, by the strong magnet of its dominating commercial position; but the Separatist prisoners in London's jails towards the end of the sixteenth century were of course a highly specialised group, selected by the narrow criterion of a minority religious view.

It is, however, worth pointing out that with the possible exception of John Dalamore, the weaver, it is most unlikely that economic activity or commercial interest was the motivation behind these people's migrations to London. Indeed, they were, as they surely must have realised, moving directly into danger, as has already been demonstrated. In the absence of any clear evidence as to why they took this step, it is valid to comment that it may well have been specifically for the purpose of establishing contact with their fellow-believers, or in the interest of maintaining and extending contacts already made. It must be acknowledged that paucity of evidence demands acceptance of the strong likelihood that our current knowledge of the Separatists represents only the tip of what may well have been a much more considerable iceberg than previous commentators have been prepared to admit.

LOCATIONS MENTIONED IN THIS THESIS OF SEPARATIST
ACTIVITY IN ENGLAND BETWEEN 1560 AND 1640



There must surely have been a communications network, however informal and tenuous, between London and East Anglia, which extended also at least to Wiltshire, Bath, Wales and Cornwall, to enable men not only to become aware of the new ideas fermenting in the crucible of the south-east, but to brave the hazards of travelling there in order to meet with like-minded people. It would be fascinating to know the nature of the infrastructure which supported relationships between Separatists identified in this study alone, as living in 16 counties extending in a great arc pivoted on London and covering the south and east of the country from Brecknockshire in the west to Yorkshire in the north.

CONCLUSION

The exploration in chapter one of the nature of Separatism makes it clear that there had emerged in late Tudor and early Stuart England a distinct homogeneous group which it is not possible to place in any other category in the broad field of religious classification appropriate to that time. It makes the point that the movement established itself in the face of keen hostility, expressed across the whole gamut of manifestations, from open and savage suppression, to subtle, insidious discrimination against its adherents. Its success in doing so constitutes convincing proof that it met a need; and it validated itself by the spread and depth of the response it elicited, both initially in the sixteenth century, and subsequently in the strength of its ongoing life for nearly half a millennium since then.

The significance of Separatism is in no small measure attributable to its provenance. It was never a system devised by human minds, a creation concocted by clever constructionists with neither connection nor relevance to the 'real' world of facts and actuality. Nor was it an ecclesiastical philosophy dreamed up in an intellectual vacuum, the brain-child of a few able but misguided eccentrics. It was the entirely logical, even though some might say unnecessarily extreme, culmination of a process which had been gestating on and off in the womb of the outwardly monolithic western church for perhaps a thousand years, if not more. It is essential always to bear in mind that Separatism - and in this respect the movement's

original identifying name is a distinct disadvantage - never was, never has been, and still is not, a genetic freak on the body of Christ, a sort of evolutionary mutation ultimately of no value to the ongoing development of the unitary organism. The point need not be laboured, since scholars and thinkers of a wide range of persuasions¹ are agreed that Separatist theology, doctrine, worship, and even their church polity, which at first glance is the characteristic that most marks them off from their contemporary fellow-Christians, are in fact all of a piece with those of the root from which they sprang. Despite the vigour of their criticisms of the ecclesiastical system from which they so vehemently dissented, the first Separatists, and their successors, were indisputably in organic union with the mainstream Christian tradition. Indeed, as is pointed out in chapter one, R.W. Dale in particular, though by no means solely, draws attention to a virtually continuous line of descent which can be regarded in some sense as tracing the ancestry of the first English Separatists as far back as the second century A.D.²

Nevertheless, the importance of this recognition is fundamental. It carries with it the entail that the Separatists were not ideologically predisposed to anti-intellectualism; they most certainly were not opposed to 'education' and all the conceptual universes associated with the term. It was hardly possible that they could be. They

¹ vide supra, chapter 1

² supra. 14

were 'products of the system', a system which placed high value on at least the outward evidences of education. They were of considerable intellectual capacity, as is evidenced by the calibre of their extant writings. They were considered capable of benefiting from the best education available in the England of their day, at the universities of Cambridge and Oxford. They used their native academic powers, developed and honed by the education they had themselves received, to such good effect that the politico-religious establishment was driven to wheeling out its own intellectual big guns in the attempt to silence them.

These assertions are made at greater length, and justified with supporting evidence, at appropriate points throughout this study, and especially in chapters three and four. On the grounds that what was formative is strongly predisposed to become normative, the educationally-relevant writings of the first few leaders of the Separatists have been surveyed in detail; but the extraordinary bravery of such men as Barrow, Greenwood and Penry, who quietly accepted the noose rather than deny the strength of their convictions, won the allegiance of more people than can be studied in depth within the compass of a work such as this. Furthermore, the interests of the 'second wave' of leaders were, due to changes in the circumstances of the days they lived in, more diffuse. Education, and all that it entailed, was only one of an increasing number of topics of concern competing for their attention in the stormy years of the reigns of James I and Charles I. Nevertheless,

such people are still of paramount importance for this study because they strikingly illustrate the extent to which education and all its ramifications - or rather, to be more accurate, education from a Christian standpoint as they perceived it - was accepted without question as a good. As with Browne, Harrison, and Barrow, so with all the leading figures from John Greenwood to John Owen: the evidence of their own education from biographies,³ of the effective use they made of their educated abilities as displayed in their writings,⁴ and of their views as to the place and value of education in a fully Christian life, corporate as well as individual - all support the contention that they viewed education as a boon to be desired, a gift to be treasured, a talent to be utilised in the service of their over-riding passion to see the church wholly reformed in full consonance with the Word of God as they understood it. It is, of course, not to be expected that every Separatist leader would consciously address the issue of 'education' at some time in the course of his preaching or writing; here, the old adage 'Absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence' is relevant. More to the point is the strong implication underlying all the considerations referred to here, that the value of education was regarded by the founding fathers of the English Separatist tradition as axiomatic, a sine qua non, so taken for granted as to be almost beyond the need for discussion or defence.

³ vide supra, chapter 4, *passim*

⁴ idem

It is here that I part company with recent writers in this field, though not so much to disagree with them, as to suggest that they have not gone far enough - hares have been started but not followed. R.L. Greaves, for instance, has made a very important distinction in his The Godly Commonwealth between Dissenters who were concerned to maintain intellectual rigour when engaging with the Scriptures, and those who for ease of reference may be comprehended in the short-hand term 'the priesthood of all believers' men. The distinction he makes has significant implications for the development of an understanding of the whole subject of my thesis. I therefore make the point in the Introduction that, in simple terms, the priesthood of all believers means direct access to God, and that for the original Separatists such access was to be gained through the Scriptures. The inescapable entail of this is that 'education' broadly conceived, and not limited to 'mere' literacy, must have been a fundamental requirement for meaningful adherence to the Separatist stance, for both parties in the movement - theological radicals fully as much as scholarly conservatives.

The Introduction (vide supra) refers to J.K. McConica's speculation that a greater understanding of the regional, economic and family circumstances standing behind the Tudor universities would facilitate a clearer perception of their precise significance. Though the universities are not the chief area of interest to this thesis, a little more light is thrown on just those areas McConica suggests

need to be explored, i.e., in chapter 2 the universities themselves, in chapters 3 and 4 the backgrounds of some of the men who attended them, and in chapter 5 brief reference to the regional and economic factors underlying their existence and development.

Similarly, evidence has been marshalled to justify the contention that Patricia Marvell is too cautious in her judgement that the early Dissenting Academies 'mainly followed the established traditional curriculum, and were not generally innovative'. It is possible that she has been over-influenced by Irene Parker's confident chopping-up of the history of the Academies into three periods; but the latter's own work revealed that even in the 'first' period (1663-1690), modern subjects were available as optional extras, and that science was in fact part of the core curriculum. For example, Daniel Defoe revealed that at Newington Green he not only mastered five languages, but also studied mathematics, natural philosophy, logic, geography, history and 'politics as a science'; while at Sheriffhales the common core consisted of logic, anatomy, mathematics, physics, ethics and rhetoric. The disciplines of theology, law and medicine, central to the established traditional curriculum, were available as additional specialisms - a change surely not so much merely innovatory, as positively revolutionary. The case for contesting Marvell's too-conservative conclusion is further borne out by the evidence relating to teaching methods at the Academies; the emphasis was on practical skills, such as preparing model sermons, writing English compositions, putting together almanacs,

dissecting animals, making sundials, undertaking land surveys, and the like.

However, I take most issue with the overall impressions left by H. Foreman's work. The main charge, notwithstanding the passing comment in the Introduction, is not one of factual inaccuracy; it is of undue caution in drawing-out conclusions which I maintain are implicit in the evidence he presents. His caution no doubt arises from a proper and perfectly understandable wish to eschew unscholarly exaggerations, and to avoid adopting an exposed position which might too easily be undermined by subsequent work; my criticism is that he has done himself and his work a disservice by not extending his judgements to the full extent that the evidence he sets out will sustain. I acknowledge the difference between our declared aims - his chief interest is in the education of the clergy, whilst my concern is for an adequate assessment of the issue of education amongst the Separatists as a whole; but obviously there is much common ground between us, and the Separatists' attitude to the preparation of people for the ministry is an important element in my study. Specifically, I have demonstrated inconsistency in his evaluation of the influence of the Anabaptists on the first Separatists; and I have moved beyond what I believe to be his too-simple classification of Separatist writers on the education of the clergy into 'for' and 'against' - I would prefer to utilise the concept of 'waves' which I have used in the titles of my chapters 3 and 4. This allows for the recognition of discernible differences of

emphasis without jettisoning the historically-essential factor of continuity over the flow of time.

Where the first Separatists did attack education, it was the content and form of education as conducted in their day that they criticised, and particularly the education of intending clergymen, rather than education per se. They had sound reason for their attacks. Those of them who had been to university could speak from their own experience of the aridity of the scholasticism which still largely dominated the curricula and pedagogy of the two universities, and even of some of the constituent colleges which throughout the period of this study were coming to supplant the universities as the agents of teaching and learning; while those who had not themselves been subjected to these experiences were justifiably critical of the results of such education as they perceived them in many of the clergy of the established church in their day. The important point here, made most specifically and supported with detailed evidence in chapter three, is that the Separatists' criticisms of education were not of the whole concept, but of the futile perversion of it, and the barren results of it, as they saw it applied to the training of contemporary clergymen. They were in fact keenly aware of the value of it in general, and its importance in ensuring the production of ministers capable of tending to good effect the flocks committed to their charge; this is demonstrated by the evidence of such men as John Penry, John Smyth and John

Robinson.⁵ The thrust of this statement is not diminished by the fact that different writers made different emphases - this is surely only to be expected from an unco-ordinated group of writers referring only incidentally to a topic which was not their dominant concern. And yet it is possible to draw together disparate threads, and to perceive the emergence of strands of consistency and coherence. Robert Browne, for example, though rarely, in the evidence available to us, writing specifically on education, took its value for granted, and was concerned at its distortion into forms and modes dictated by the, as he perceived them, perverted beliefs and values of the unreformed church.⁶ John Greenwood had, apparently, less to say on education. By contrast, Henry Barrow mercilessly lashed the 'education' given to putative ordinands in his day; but it is very greatly to his credit that he did not leave the matter there. He moved on from the merely negative to the positively constructive with his proposals for the sound grounding of intending clergymen, not only in the Scriptures, but also in those background competences such as the classical languages, Biblical exegesis and yes, even rhetoric - rightly understood and taught - which were emerging as prime requirements for the adequate preparation of the new preaching ministers of the English protestant church. Indeed, he is arguably the most significant witness to the Separatist position on education, by virtue both of the volume of

⁵ vide supra, chapter 4

⁶ vide supra, chapter 3

his writing on the subject, and also of its breadth. Not only does he lay out a tentative ground-plan for the proper education of the clergy, but he goes a long way to drawing up a Separatist manifesto for education - his ringing declaration that "I would not have it any longer kept secret in a myserie, but even proclaimed upon the house top in everie citie and in every street"⁷ is repeated here because it can well stand for the corner-stone of the contention that Separatists' attitudes to education need the thorough-going re-assessment which this thesis attempts, and which will justify crediting them with a liberal and humane affirmation of its value.

Of course one swallow does not make a summer, and this case rests on more than the evidence of Henry Barrow's writings, prominent though he indisputably is among his peers. In what I have described as the second wave of leading Separatists, John Robinson has fully as significant a contribution to make as Henry Barrow in the matter of attitudes to education. The importance he attached to it is demonstrated in the analysis⁸ of his writings on the subject. Their comprehensive coverage in his New Essays: or Observations Divine and Moral⁹ makes the discernment of Separatist views on education appreciably clearer. They are comprehensive insofar as they go considerably further than the recommendations

⁷ vide supra, 202

⁸ vide supra, chapter 4

⁹ idem

of such men as Barrow, Penry and Smyth, who were by and large preoccupied with reforming the education of the clergy.

It is the case that in some respects, though by no means all, Separatist views on education are not radically different from those expressed by some Puritan writers. For example, there is close approximation to the theme of Penry's The Aequity of an Humble Supplication, published in 1587, in a Puritan treatise of 1584,¹⁰ which similarly pressed the case for the provision of ministers able to teach and expound the Scriptures to their congregations; though there is a slight but defining difference in the emphases placed on the reasons for advocating such provision - the 1584 Puritan tract saw it more as a means of maintaining law and order, whereas Penry based his 1587 plea on more specifically spiritual grounds. This particular example serves to highlight one of the problems confronting students of Separatism; for the eighty or so years covered by this study, Separatism was undeniably overshadowed by the much more obvious Puritanism which was then such a strong factor in Presbyterianism and Anglicanism. It is by no means always a simple task to differentiate Separatist ideas and history from those of the Puritanism from which it sprang, and which it initially so closely resembled. This is especially the case with education, which was, even though only relatively, less important to the Separatists than matters more narrowly ecclesiastical. This

¹⁰

vide A. Peel (ed.), The Seconde part of a Register (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1915) i, 268

is why chapter four of this thesis extends its coverage to no fewer than 17 of the Separatist/Independent/ Congregational leaders who were born, and grew to maturity, during the years 1560 to 1640. Their contributions to the (secondary) interest of education were, inevitably, varied; their importance for my contention derives from the evidence they provide that early modern English religious Separatism was very far removed from the iconoclasm of continental Anabaptists, or the extremism of the Family of Love, with both of which it was at times maliciously confused. Drawing attention to the background, training, abilities and achievements of these men establishes irrefutably that they were men endowed with very considerable educational potential, a potential which they themselves recognised and grasped, to the incalculable contemporary and future benefit of the movement they led. It is surely significant that nowhere is there evidence that any of the Separatists ever criticised the educational views or attainments of their fellow-Dissenters. There was no need for them to articulate an elaborate 'defence' of education, for its value, when construed in accordance with their understanding of its right content and form, was never in doubt - it was analogous to one of the talents entrusted by the master to his servants when he took his journey into a far country.¹¹

¹¹

The Gospel according to Luke, chapter 19, verses 11 to 27 (New English Bible, Oxford and Cambridge, 1961)

The contribution of this study to a clearer understanding of the attitude of early modern English Separatists to education culminates in the specific case-studies in chapter five. The leaders noticed in chapters three and four were, by definition, out of the ordinary. Their own education has been shown to be significant, and their views on the value of the concept as a whole have been shown to be positive; but it could be protested that their writings, though certainly influential, were in one sense 'merely' theoretical, and could perhaps be charged with the weakness of being idealistic - not conspicuously related to the reality of life. The importance of the people listed in chapter five is that they were practitioners of the theory of Separatism; and not only so, but that they exhibited levels of education which suggest that positive attitudes to it were not confined to the leading lights of the movement. The number of individual witnesses quoted is extensive enough to provide assurance that the conclusions drawn from the evidence are valid. The lists and tables reveal the socio-economic spread of the subjects of the investigation. This is important because it extends the survey well beyond the narrow limits of the clerical/intellectual/professional group considered in chapters three and four. The fact that all the available evidence relating to these people springs from the relatively unusual and certainly constricted base of interrogation in the context of a judicial inquiry may actually inspire further confidence in the validity of the conclusions drawn here, in that the evidence arises from the application of consistent criteria. Everyone was being measured by the same yard-stick, which provides reassuring grounds for accepting the findings of this study.

Edward Gibbon's shrewd comment, made more than two centuries ago, is strikingly relevant to the problems facing students of the subject of this thesis:

The confusion of the times, and the scarcity of authentic memorials, oppose equal difficulties to the historian, who attempts to preserve a clear and unbroken thread of narration. Surrounded with imperfect fragments, always concise, often obscure, and sometimes contradictory, he is reduced to collect, to compare, and to conjecture; and although he ought never to place his conjectures in the rank of facts, yet the knowledge of human nature, and of the sure operation of its fierce and unrestrained passions, might, on some occasions, supply the want of historical materials.¹²

Early modern English Separatism and its very first adherents are elusive, inhabiting as they do a corner of history little documented and less understood, both then and since. This study seeks to shed a little more light on their involvement, both theoretical and practical, in the field of education. The conclusion it draws is that other writers on this topic whose work is considered in this study, have not done them full justice. In particular, the detailed and original analysis made in chapter 5 above justifies crediting them with a more healthy respect for the intrinsic value of education, a more robust awareness of its practical utility, and a more lively advocacy of its potency in the cause of their over-riding passion to complete the reformation of the Church according to the pure principles of the Word of God, than has been accorded them by previous and current writers on the subject.

¹²

E. Gibbon The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (ed. B. Radice) Vol. 1 "The Turn of the Tide" (London, The Folio Society, 1983) 221

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